Random Thoughts

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Vol. III

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MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & CO-OPERATION
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

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Random Thoughts Vol. III is a collection of Monthly Letters of the Minister of Community Development and Co-operation, for the years 1957 and 1958. As in the case of earlier volumes, no attempt has been made to edit or abridge the letters. The letters have been arranged chronologically.

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I

February 4, 1957.

I will continue pouring myself out. How it reacts at the receiving end is none of my concern.

I had written to you on the eve of the New Year, last. I had mentioned that the New Year Day was one of heart-searching. I did a lot of it. I had recorded my thoughts in an article for the next issue of "Kurukshetra" which will be out in the next couple of days. You may be interested in glancing across the pages, because the thoughts were as much yours as mine.

You will have received by now the new publication from the CPA under the title "A Guide to Community Development." This was specially written by our friend Dr. Ensminger of the Ford Foundation, to serve more or less as a handbook for all our workers. You saw the manuscript in draft form. The finished book incorporates all the amendments suggested from the field. I do not know of a fuller publication on this subject. I hope our workers at all levels will take the trouble of studying the material with the care and zeal that has gone into its production. It will do us a world of good, especially the B.D.Os., the Extension Officers and the Gram Sevaks. In fact, I would even commend the beginning of the study circle we talked of, with this book as the first item.

"WE AND OUR COUNTRY"

I mentioned to you in my last letter that we should utilise the atmosphere thrown up by the forthcoming election for spreading social education among the people who are involved in our programme. As a happy coincidence, the Prime Minister, I find has

commended the same to all political workers, I promised to send you a small leaflet on the subject of our Constitution and the implications of "vote" in the democracy we are trying to build up. Our friend, K. S. V. Raman, now the Chairman of the Public Service Commission in Bihar, came to my rescue. A leaflet "We and Our Country" is the outcome. This has been approved by the Election Commission. We have published 25,000 copies in English only, as there was little time left for local language translation. Sufficient copies have been sent out to the field, so that a copy each will be available for distribution to all our workers in the field, including the Gram Sevaks. The leaflet, as you will find, is an admirable sum-up on the subject, and should help everyone in understanding the meaning of election in all its bearings.

You may find it worthwhile to ask the B.D.Os. immediately on receipt of this letter to have a short conference at the Block Headquarters with all their staff including the Gram Sevaks for a study of this leaflet. This organisation has no concern as to whom the people vote for. But it has every concern to ensure that people do understand our Constitution, the meaning of election and the vote they cast during the event. I would consider this to be an essential point in our approach to social education. The time is short. I do hope all the same, that you will be able to make the necessary arrangements to take care of this primary assignment.

INTRA-MINISTRY SEMINAR IN CPA

I had mentioned to you in one of my letters, I believe several months ago, that in my over-anxiety to be in touch with work in the field I had been erring on the side of neglect of the CPA organisation at the Centre. I intended to hold an intra-ministry seminar as a first step in the direction of unified thinking and action, and as a second step towards readaptation of the Central organisation to the new chapter in our programme which had already begun to unroll and in which the role of CPA had perforce to undergo a radical change in content, although perhaps not so much in character. I am glad to record that the collective inter-change of ideas in an atmosphere totally free from restraints brought into relief shortcomings which we should remedy if we are to continue to be fully useful to the States. I believe, we also appreciated the fact that a progressive of 'Yesterday' is the invariable reactionary of 'Tomorrow', unless he continues to grow vertically with the living movement of which he is a part. The CPA staff made a remarkable contribution at a stage when the Development Commissioners were functioning, for all practical purposes, in isolation from other departments. Whatever technical assistance could then be offered from the Central organisation, served as a complement to the Development Commissioners' armoury for the implementation of the programme limited to a few blocks which could be visited individually by the CPA representatives.

With the expansion of the programme to the point where we have already covered more than 40 per cent of our rural population and

with the involvement that has already taken place in some form or the other of the departments of States, the role that our specialists have to play in the future takes on a totally different complexion. From a position of spot advisers the CPA representatives, especially the technical specialists, have to grow into functional advisers. Thus alone can they contribute to the growth of the technical departments in the States by virtue, on one hand, of the knowledge they possess of the corresponding Ministries' programme in the Centre during the second Five-Year Plan, and on the other, of the pooled knowledge of India on the subject which they are in a position to acquire and which they should transmit to the departments in the State by way of adding to the sub-total of an individual State's experiences. I realise that this is a tall order on our technical functionaries. But not being charged with the direct responsibility for the implementation of the programme, this is what we must strive for, if CPA services are not to be a superfluous imposition on the hard-pressed functionaries in the States.

If this is to be achieved, it is obvious, our visits to States will have to be a two-way traffic. We have to learn from every State every bit of the new lessons that the individual States are developing on their own, and simultaneously we have to transmit to every individual State we visit, the knowledge we thus pool from all States. You too have to help us in this two-way traffic which alone can contribute to the enrichment of our programme and its impact in depth. If we are to be active partners in this common enterprise, continued growth in us as an organisation at the Centre strictly proportional to the growth that takes place in the field, is an inescapable "Must".

THE AFTERMATH OF THE SEMINAR

The CPA seminar has indicated the imperative need for deeper thinking. We propose to utilise the interregnum forced by the forthcoming election for clearing ourselves of all cobwebs in our thinking and action, that have grown since the first flush of the victory of our movement. We are hoping to have a single accommodation in Delhi, where the CPA organisation as a whole can function during working hours as a community in action. We are already engaged in evolving a system which will be self-propelling and which can render even a better quality of service to the States than we offered during the early years of this programme. I am also confident that the May Conference of Development Commissioners, which is not far off, can also look forward to an agenda this time which will be more appropriate to the present context of operations and which will demand perhaps a full week this time of fundamental thinking.

CPA by virtue of its position is expected to provide the lead in the pattern of State seminars and other activities of like nature. It seems clear that unless a re-charging process is in operation, we shall run a grave risk of getting "normalised" in the way some of our post-intensive Blocks were threatened at one stage. May I assure you, we are

eager to render to you the measure of assistance we owe to you. We should before long be able to come up to your full expectations.

THE LESSON ON THE WIDER FRONT

I have gone at length to explain our shortcomings. We are a part of the all-India movement and, therefore, the gaps in us could not be something confined to the Central organisation alone, and I thought my analysis of our failings might prove of some help to you for a probe in your own organisation also. The programme has grown. It is impossible for the Development Commissioners to have a grip over the programme unless they also build up a system which is self-propelling. Special staff at the level of the District or the Division to provide for vigilant contact with the ground and the involvement of the Heads of Departments at the State Headquarters to provide the lateral thrust we talked about sometime ago, will have to be ushered in without a moment's delay. I am prepared personally to plead with your government for such support as the programme in its present shape calls for. But you have to do the basic thinking as to the pattern which can bring this about and the gaps that will have to be filled. I wish, you will do something about it. Let me repeat, it is no use asking the Collector to treat this programme as a top priority unless we are prepared to give him relief through assistance at his level or at the level of the Division. I see no escape out of it, today.

WHEREWITHAL FOR COORDINATION

No department in a State or a ministry in the Centre can have its activities coordinated with those of other departments or Ministries, unless the agency in the State or in the Centre functions *de jure* as well as *de facto* as a service-agency for specific purposes on behalf of all the agencies collectively. The Ministry of Community Development is another ministry in the Centre. It receives its collective term of reference from the Central Committee just as the Planning and Development agency in the State receives its term of reference from the State Development Committee. We have just had today the first meeting of the Central Committee following the creation of this ministry. This will be made a regular feature every quarter, and oftener, if required. I am asking my office to send you a copy of the proceedings of the meeting by way of information. I am mentioning this here because I know it for a certainty that this multi-purpose cooperative programme cannot have a smooth passage unless the State Development Committee which has the Chief Minister of the State as its Chairman, and the State Advisory Committee which is headed by the Development Commissioner, function as effective and regular instruments of government. You will do well to do some further thinking, on the "monolithic instrument of action based on the democratic instrument of decision", we have discussed in earlier letters. We shall be building our whole structure on shifting sands, unless we give shape to these two institutions at the State level in form as well as in

substance. The Development Commissioner in the State, and for that matter the Collectors, the S.D.Os., the B.D.Os., and also the Gram Sevaks have to grow to be embodiments of the plan as a whole at their respective levels. Community Development then alone can grow to be a combination of life and area development both, with the programme growing increasingly co-terminus with the plan. The wider sanction for it, is already there, if we take special care to give life to the institutions we have set up for the purpose.

TECHNICAL PERSONNEL

While administrative sanctions can be vitalised with the vitalisation of the State Development and State Advisory Committees at the State Headquarters, the biggest bottleneck will arise from gaps in technical departments. I have been appalled by the extent of our shortages in technical manpower—executive as well as supervisory, and by the compromises we are being forced to make in the quality and coverage in technical fields. I know, we are doing everything possible in States to expand facilities for the training of technical personnel. While we may reach our target as to the number eventually, the quality of personnel will persist as a recurring problem. Our technical institutions are not going to achieve any miracles in their system of training over-night. What do we do about it then ? I believe, we have here a lesson to learn from England and America as to the methods they adopted for building an army over-night against the rushing hordes of Hitler. You will agree with me I hope, that it is not today a problem so much of paucity of technical knowledge as the lack of an active desire on the part of technical functionaries to excel themselves as technician artists.

THE ARTIST CREATOR

An artist, we know, is a free man who cannot afford to be branded in castes. The true artist is the born creator who pulsates with the rhythm of the cosmos. The young men and women who hail to join our flock, can be made to give their best if only we can establish equality with them. Your spot reaction to what I am driving at, may be that as an abstraction the theory is infallible, but in hard boiled life it does not work that way. I am prepared, my friend, to take a challenge upon myself and to give you one in turn. Next time you are out in the field, do give me a trial by sitting with your colleagues in the block, including the Gram Sevaks, on a common durree under the shade of a tree in the open, conduct your proceedings there after first having put everybody at rest, as regards your official position *vis-a-vis* the others (mind you, this will not work within the compass of a room with the chairs and tables which are too closely associated in our mind with the legacies of the dead past), you will be amazed to discover the insight into our programme, nay even life itself, that a most unassuming Gram Sevak can reflect if only you succeed in having effaced your official position completely for the duration, and that way pull out the inner vitality of this low-down functionary in our hierarchy which should ache for an expression as frantically as the man in

you and me or for that matter in anyone. I send this prescription out because I know it is infallible. I have tried this out, and I continue to follow it as a regular routine. I know, many of you would have had similar experiences. Do commend this for a trial by our friends along the line.

MAN WORTH MORE THAN THE VESTMENT

Believe me, even for our own selves it will be an experience worth having at all costs, for the man in the end is worth much more than the vestment in which he is contained. We know, the days of monarchy are long past despite the eruptions of international gangsterism and blackmail which we saw and are seeing on the world scene as passing phases. Individual monarchs are gone or are going. But the monarchy of mind still persists as a hang-over which peeps out of us all, in greater or smaller measure. The seer is one who anticipates, the wise man reads the writing on the wall, the fool hangs on to ghosts and shadows.

Science opened up a new vista of possibilities 250 years ago. Gangsters harnessed the new force of freedom for enthronement of a few to the enslavement of the many. Nature is out for revenge on this blasphemy. The grip of fear under which the most corpulent of us shiver from day to day are but the manifestation of the contradictions our misuse of nature has released, in place of the realisation of life for which the vault of the treasure-house was unlocked.

The days of towers in isolation from life are over, unless we go back to the stone age. Science in a word means—"Organisation of Truth". Organisation implies collective action. If man is to co-exist with science, he has to re-learn the meaning of the new call to leadership. Our programme, we have seen, is one of leadership at every point. The organisation will not function unless the skipper and the players meet and act on the same level. The choice is ours to make. "Yesterday" is dead. "Tomorrow" is inevitable. But, "Tomorrow" can by-pass us again. Can we afford it?

In quest of the answer!

II

March 6, 1957.

The battle for the ballot box is in full blast. The government agency as a whole is involved directly or indirectly in looking to the arrangements. We discreetly called a halt to our programme of tours to States by representatives of this ministry. We did not wish to add further to your burden. This period at the headquarters, with all officials of the ministry together, is being applied to problems that we should discuss at the coming Development Commissioners' Conference. We are also working for a self-propelling system within the ministry which could promise more effective services to the States on lines I visualised in my earlier letters to you.

During the month of February I have been able, through the break-neck effort of my friends in the respective States, to have a glimpse across the programme on the ground in Orissa, Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. These hurricane programmes go farther to confirm in my mind the degree to which the government apparatus has got itself involved in its new relationship with the people and how individual officers, by and large, have already taken to this programme in the spirit of a crusade. A new stature, a growing personality, and new dimensions in outlook are in the making. There can be no mistake about it, for I come back invariably refreshed and rejuvenated, the heavy hours, the dust, the wind, the sun and the other grind notwithstanding.

VILLAGES IN THE MAP OF NEW INDIA

Our villages which remained obliterated from the map of India for centuries, have begun to rush in for their rightful place. Indeed, the villages are already there on the map. Whatever may happen in the future, one thing seems certain beyond question. Towns and cities with their loud noise and neon-lights will no longer hold the monopoly as heretofore. Villages with the number of heads they represent, shall count. What expression this landslide movement will develop will, of course, be determined by the patience and intelligence that we can muster for our thinking, and by the determination with which we can help in the shaping of the new direction. Village people are awake or are waking up—men, women and children. Their representatives also will grow from within or be drawn in from without so as to give to them the institutional pattern through which they

could secure their expression. The steps already visualised by us and those we are still to discuss during the forthcoming Development Commissioners' Conference should help. I look forward keenly to your contribution to the common pool of thinking before we take the next step.

ADMINISTRATION A SPECIALISATION

The more I think of the epic task which destiny has thrust on us, the more thrilled I feel at the role that administrator can play in the new dispensation. Administration deliberately divorced from its regulatory authority is rising already to the role of an educator—a role which normally should have been discharged by our colleges and universities. But things being what they are, the additional burden falls invariably on the government organisation. Perhaps, it is as well that it is so. If India as we know her has any meaning at all, it was but appropriate that the steel-frame on which the denial of independence from foreign rule rested, should also be in charge of the task to find the answer as to how deliverance can be ushered in for the masses of our people, now that the mandate from the ruling power is the establishment of a socialist cooperative commonwealth in place of the feudalism that still threatens us as a people from within and without.

Had India been a totalitarian State or one intended to be designed that way, the demand some of us make, namely that the political organisations should take up the responsibility for social education of people, would have had justification. In a democracy such as we are out to evolve, and which by its definition will mean a multi-party State, it is obvious that local institutions of people, and the education of these for progressively wider responsibilities, cannot logically vest in parties crossing each other, if order and not chaos is to be our objective. Who then can play the role of giving birth to, and educating these, free institutions of people from the ground upwards but the government agency which alone can, by its term of reference, claim to be non-political in character.

ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATION IS WHAT RICE AND CURRY IS

Being a rice-eater by habit, I am reminded at every meal as to how pungent and unconsumable the best prepared dishes can be minus rice, bread or chapati, and conversely how tasteless and sterile, rice and chapati alone can be without the dishes that must invariably go with it. The ideal diet is a happy blending of the right quantity of cereal with the right vegetable or meat dishes. The generalised services at the disposal of the administrator can be likened to the rice or chapati, and the curry and allied dishes likened to the skill and knowledge that technical agencies can offer. A good administrator is one who knows the art of blending, something like the house-wife at home who understands the idiosyncracies of all the inmates of the house and serves them according to their tastes and appetites without

destroying in the process the individual characteristics of the elements that go into the menu.

COOPERATION OR PARTICIPATION

In my travel across the length and breadth of India, I look for participation in the programme by all our friends representing the various technical facets of our government. I find invariably that participation is yet to come. What has come so far indeed, is a certain degree of cooperation. The development of this country cannot be the monopoly of one particular group of people represented in a political party. Likewise the administrative agency cannot have the monopoly of national reconstruction. It is not designed for it either, unless the administrative agency is to degrade inevitably to an authoritarian dispenser of doles and justice ! Our objective being just the opposite, technical agencies must need share to the very full this assignment of national regeneration. Technical people cannot be commandeered to give their best. They can be inspired. Administrative agency can also serve to clear the hurdles on their way.

SEMINARS HEREAFTER

Slogans, we know, do not and cannot deliver substance, nor even can legal or administrative mandates. The heart of course can help, provided the mind is mature enough to devise administrative measures appropriate to the occasion. Had it not been so, the directive principles of our Constitution and the legislative measures we have taken for opening the temples to the harijans and others, should have been enough to lift them to the level which is theirs by right, now that we have gone through nearly ten years of independence.

The administrative measures that we visualise as the first step in our programme for the revitalisation of technical agencies are the substitution in the future of technical seminars for the administrative seminars so far held by us. The next series of inter-State seminars the CPA proposes to hold from the coming season onwards will be subject-matter seminars, in which the main participants will be the Heads of respective departments from States with which Development Commissioners and others will be associated. The same system can prevail in the intra-State and regional seminars within States. Generalist seminars, if these are to continue could be designed primarily for bringing officials and non-officials together, for a broadening of understanding in the new dispensation in which we face each other.

If the process could be initiated, I have no doubt we would have taken the first logical step for the delegation of initiative appropriately where it should rest. With the hang-over of neglect and under-emphasis on technical nation-building departments for ages, the process is going to be a long drawn out one. But it must begin some time, if we are to avoid travelling in an opposite direction. The question has many an implication. It is being studied carefully by our co-workers in the ministry, and I look forward to having the whole

question thrashed out at the Development Commissioners' Conference, after which we shall plunge straight into the action agreed to.

STUDY CIRCLES AND STAFF MEETINGS

We have agreed that an effective method for adding to the knowledge of our technical staff and getting them re-oriented to the new task, is to encourage study by them of literature which is exclusively designed for our programme. Here again, mere pious wishes will serve no purpose. These have to be translated into tangible administrative measures. I would strongly recommend block staff meetings in the future to include about half a day of discussion in every session on a particular book, manual, handbook or pamphlet issued by the CPA from the Centre or from the States. If we follow this up systematically, the results in a year should stagger our own expectations.

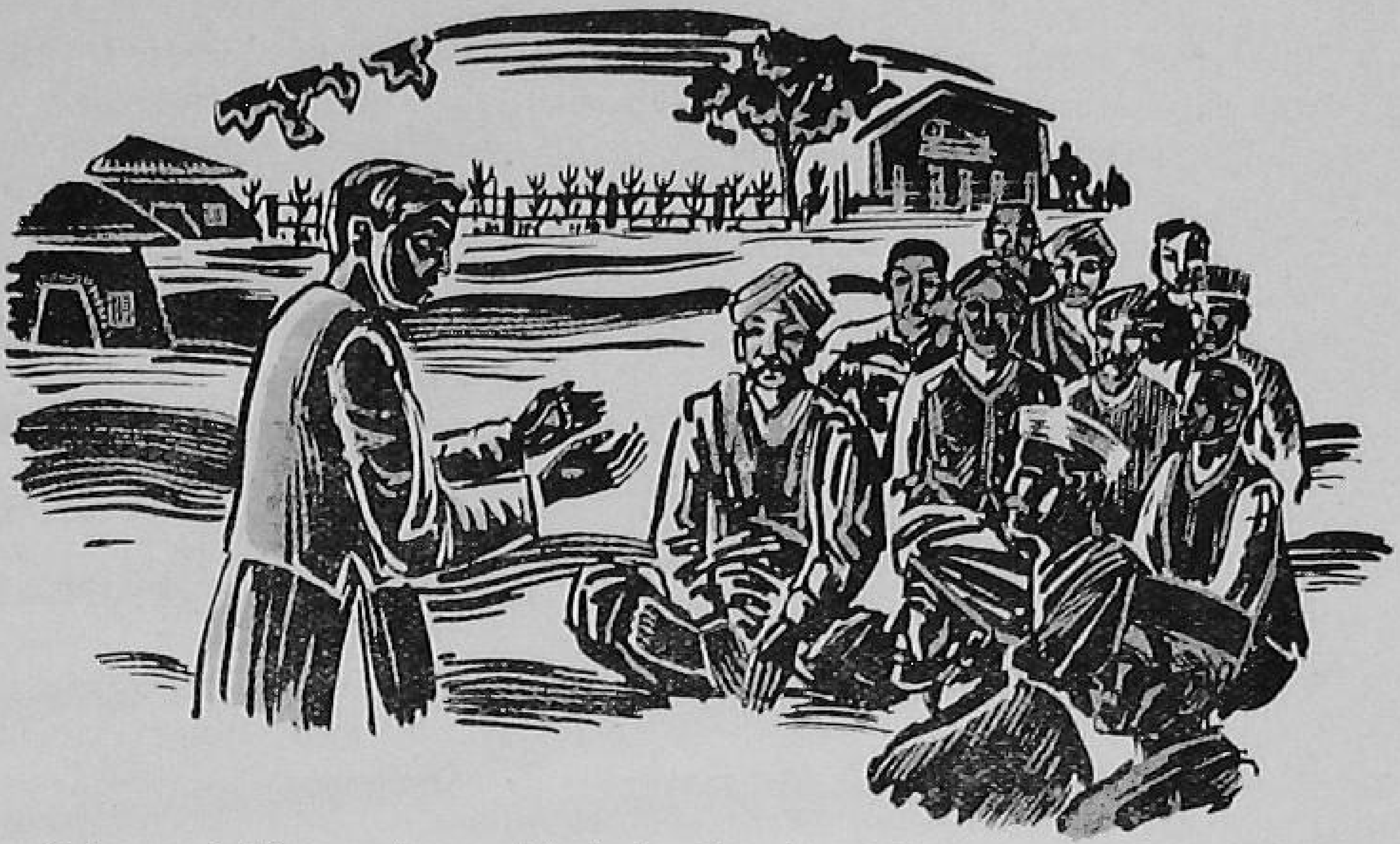
BLOCK ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS BY ROTATION

If there is one point about which I am dead certain, it is that Block Advisory Committee meetings should be held in a rural atmosphere by rotation in outstanding villages thrown up during the period. Block Advisory Committee meetings are intended to be democratic forums for the reviewing of operations and making of decisions and in the process for the revitalisation of technical agencies. The official atmosphere is not quite conducive to free thinking by the cross-section of our personnel of different ranks. Besides, the meetings in villages can easily be used as incentives for inter-village competition for the dignity that the selection of a village as the venue of the meeting can be made to signify. They will further help the drawing of our village people in free discussions. I am sure, we are bold and open enough in this programme to have our cards on the table. Village people all over India are born democrats. They understand the obligations of democracy, if it is practised honestly in their midst. I have never found an exception to it even in the most intellectual of villages.

FARMERS' CAMPS

You will remember the decision we took when we met at Delhi on December 10, 1956, about the holding of Farmers' Camps in Village Level Workers' circles by rotation under the Block Extension Officer (Agriculture), with the association of other Extension staff. If properly guided by the Block Development Officer and directed by the district staff of the department, these camps can bring about a two-way traffic in knowledge of ground problems and the answer that modern science can offer. Apart from the democratic process that such camps will undoubtedly generate, the system will also ensure the beginning of a single-line connection between the Head of a technical department with his specialty on the ground. This programme should be undertaken as early as we can, with all the intelligence and vigour we can apply to it. We can repeat the same process eventually on other subjects as well by drawing in the Extension Officers belonging

to the other facets of the programme along with the members of their hierarchies all along the line.



I have deliberately avoided dealing in this letter with other than one subject namely the role, in the new context, of administration *vis-a-vis* technical agencies, the people and their representatives. I have made suggestions by way of illustration. If these are followed up, I have no doubt, answers in various other forms will emerge and that way we shall have begun to tackle this one serious and crucial problem that faces us in our march on to our Destination.

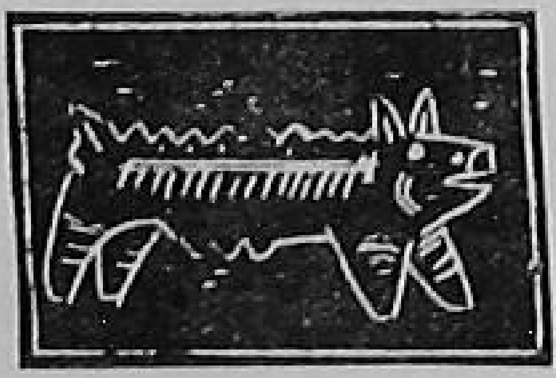
The other basic problems that should exercise our mind are the non-official agencies and institutions, programme of women, and the establishment of a system such as can continue giving guidance to this movement based on institutionalised pooling of all-India knowledge independent of personalities. The step we are taking to bring into existence a Central Institute for Study and Research on Community Development is designed to answer the last question. Our association with the Social Welfare Board for women's programme in Community Development Blocks which should come in force by 1st of April, should help activising the women's programme. The steps we propose to take following our discussions in the Development Commissioners' Conference on non-official agencies should put us on the wise on this subject also.

While we think of these basic problems and the resuscitation of our people and our culture, from the stalemate and slump we have suffered over past centuries, we find on the wider horizon the emergence of sinister forces afresh which are conspiring to put the clock back. Our persistent effort to maintain our neutrality in between the rash forces of "Tomorow" and the ghosts of "Yesterday" will appear to be a challenge to both. The coming months and, may be, years appear to be fraught with still more severe trials for us as a

people. Insanity refuses to leave sanity alone. We have to pay the price.

The clock-work precision with which the forces of democracy are finding expression in this land of 380 millions today in the battle of the ballot which is still on, appears to add further to the venom of jealousies in those who find it difficult to practise the democracy they profess, as also those others who are afraid of our growing strength within and without. It is weak vegetation that demands the shelter of a hot-house. An organism which is vital can only grow in strength with the impact of an opposition. Our people have shown an amazing sense of balance during recent weeks in the face of blatant threats and abuses on us and the reaction in the international parlour to which we have been sorry and amused spectators. These we know, are ill-winds that we must face, if we are to climb. We will emerge all the stronger from the ordeal.

The Community Development Programme in the background of these strains and stresses promises to be an oasis of effort for the saints and devils alike with all the ramifications in between. Our people we have seen, are on the move. Our officers are in the front of the battle. Our leaders stand by our side and then we have "Tomorrow" beckoning us and "Yesterday" pushing us from behind. According to Prof. Toynbee with whom I had an opportunity recently to discuss the physics and philosophy of this programme, Community Development in India is the most significant thing that is happening in the world today. It would have a big impact on history, if it can be pursued with the patience, perseverence and enthusiasm which have so far characterised this movement.



III

April 3, 1957.

You will have read in the Press about Mr. Aneurin Bevan's recent visit to the NES and CD Blocks. He spent two fairly compressed days over these. I accompanied him. We passed through five districts in Uttar Pradesh, saw a good number of villages and institutions, met a fair cross-section of our village people and co-workers, also visited some training institutions and met the trainees and the trainers. The excitement in the people was writ large in the pupil of their eye. Mr. Bevan enjoyed and shared the excitement.

In his talks with me and the villagers he confirmed that while only a beginning has been made and a good deal remains to be done, the most amazing element in the situation is that the minority represented in the top and middle classes of our society, has given the sanction to awaken those at whose sufferance that minority has lived since the dawn of history. From this point of view what is being attempted is rather unique and has vital significance for the growth of democratic socialism in the world of 'Tomorrow'.

DEMOCRACY MUST TRAVEL UP

He further agreed that democracy in our Parliament and our State Legislatures will be short-lived unless it travels down to our villages through tiers of self-governing local institutions of people. Village panchayats represent the foundation to the future, and these will have to find their fulfilment in progressive rise to higher stages upto the Parliament. The future, according to Mr. Bevan, would be determined by the character we succeed in imparting to these institutions, and by the degree to which we can reduce disparities between urban and

rural areas. Urban areas have always been carbuncles on the countryside. If democracy is to be secure, exploitation of one by the other will have to be replaced by co-existence.

BOUQUETS AND BRICKBATS

While we have received approval of our approach and appreciation of our efforts so far from friends in India and abroad you will also have read in the Press about the severe complaints made recently to the Prime Minister by many a leader of public opinion regarding the waste incurred in the Community Development programme and its "futility". We may or may not agree. We may even feel hurt. Despite all the intelligent and grinding efforts of our workers by and large, the fact nevertheless has to be faced that there are people who do not feel kindly towards the programme.

LET US LOOK WITHIN

I do not of course expect everyone to be sympathetic to what we are doing. It would indeed be a dull world if there was to be so much of conformity. Diversity is the richest asset of India. Therefore, opinions will vary, and they must for the health of the organism. We need doing introspection however, as to whether we have done all we could to transfer the title-deeds for decisions and actions to the people and their representatives at all levels. The fact that our post-intensive Blocks have posed such a problem for us during the past year will confirm that we are yet far from the "people's programme" we were charged to build. People's programme with government's participation, which is our objective, is still a slogan and has yet to develop substance.

THE NEW APPROACH

With the elections throwing in a new Legislature and a new Parliament we have a Godsend opportunity to try out a fresh approach during the next three or four years. Since this "new approach" will constitute the key feature of the discussion during the forthcoming Development Commissioners' Conference I have chosen to make this letter a continuation of my last communication to you.

We have agreed, at least I presume so, that the administrative agency cannot be the substitute for the entire government machinery and even more so for the people's representatives in people's own institutions. Therefore, cost what it may, we must discover and implement a programme whereby we can share our responsibility to the very full with the rest of the agencies of government on one side and people's representatives on the other. I believe we have succeeded at last in evolving a programme which can provide the answer. If the programme is administratively correct it should, of necessity, grow from the ground and yet offer full scope at all levels for people one step above, to provide guidance to those thinking and acting immediately below. Here is the proposal, which is for you to consider, approve or amend at the conference.

VILLAGE CAMPS—THE NEW FEATURE

With effect from October 2, 1957, we shall organise village camps for the training of villagers including panchayat and cooperative leaders in various technical facets of development as covered by our programme. The subjects for discussions will be categorised into five groups more or less as follows :

(1) Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Minor Irrigation.
(2) Village Industries and Housing.
(3) Health, Sanitation and Education.
(4) Panchayats, Cooperatives, Village Communications.
(5) Women and Children.

Camps will be for durations of about three days according to the will of the people. These will be held at the rate of one camp in each category of subjects in all Gram Sevak circles during a year. Participation by active members in these camps will be limited to a ceiling of 50 in each camp although others, as many as choose to join, may attend as guests for observation. The camps will include technical exhibitions on the relevant subjects by the Departments concerned. Expenditure for exhibition materials will be met out of the respective subject-matter budget under the programme.

Camps will be held by rotation in the Gram Sevak circles and will be conducted in open air, in the village school, in the village chaupal or panchayatghar or any other public place available. Participants will come early in the morning from their home village which will be within a maximum of 3 to 4 miles distance from the site. They will go back late in the evening after the day's programme in the camp seminar followed by recreational activities. Each individual will bring his or her own food for lunch except where the host village or the project offers a community lunch based entirely on local raw materials. Camps will, of necessity, be held during the season off from the normal full-time activities of the participants.

Camps will be conducted by the Extension Officers representing the respective subjects in the Block. The Social Education Organiser will look after the organisation of the camp, methods and procedures for the seminars and other ancillary arrangements including recreational programme for the evening. The Gram Sevak representing the circle will be an additional member of the staff looking after the camp. Besides this Block staff, the village school teachers, whom we shall have trained under the special programme, or those who take interest in these camps will also be represented in the committee of management.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

The selection of village people attending the camps will be made by a committee representing the village panchayats, the Block organisation and other non-official institutions. There will be clear criteria

to ensure that only those will be selected for these camps who have special interest in the subjects and the aptitude and inclination for extending the techniques of these camp seminars together with the knowledge pooled, to their compatriots in the individual villages to which they belong, on their return. We have several schemes now, such as schemes for participation of village leaders in State seminars, for travel in zones within the State, intra-State and inter-State, which will be correlated to each other. Selection of members for wider participation will be based on their contribution to their own villages and to wider circles.

THE CHAIN REACTIONS THAT FOLLOW

This short-term trained cadre of villagers who should number about 14 million by the end of the second Five-Year Plan, practically at no cost to government, will provide the subject-matter base to village development such as can be a new auxiliary for the re-orientation of panchayat and cooperative politics now ruling in our country-side. These camps will offer opportunities for non-official members of Block Advisory Committees, also members of State Legislature to have a well-defined role in this programme of extension education for them-selves as also others who are less happily placed and whose mouthpiece they are.

The camps will offer to technical specialists at the Block level an incentive to study their subjects in literature and on the field to be able to make their contribution to these camps and to avoid embar-rassment to themselves if they are to face the people. These camps will offer a direct link for problems from the ground to travel up to the centre and for answers based on science to travel down the same route. Technical agencies, for the first time, will assume the new role of extension educators which is theirs by right. To the extent they suc-ceed, and succeed they must, the dignity now missing in our technical agencies will be restored progressively at all levels.

These camps will, by their very logic, force the Block Develop-ment Officer to function as the coordinator for the programme rather than the feudal overlord which his present position sometime tempts him to be. If the programme is implemented with the devotion and dynamics that characterised the 1952 movement ,it should attract wider participation by people and their representatives. Block Advisory Committee members will no longer have to be mere passive recorders of their signature on the dotted line. The B.D.O. can grow to be the administrator at the Block level he is intended to be, with his burden shared by technical agencies and the people's representa-tives alike.

OUR TRAINING CENTRES

The B.D.O. and S.E.O. Training Centres run on behalf of this ministry can then be developed as pilot plans for the running of these village camps as integral features of their training curriculum in the villages around the Training Centres. The same can eventually extend

to the Extension Training Centres, the Supervisors' Training Centres, the Home Economics Training Centres, the Village Industries Training Centres, and others yet in the offing. The content of the training programme will receive corresponding enrichment in the process, and the trainees will receive in these institutions training in actual problems they face in these village seminars instead of indulging in hypothetical "job and problem orientation" which we have been talking so loudly and, perhaps, understanding so little about.

OUR LITERATURE

The minimum programmes which we have drawn for the Development Commissioners' Conference in all subjects can lend itself to be incorporated in brief working manuals combining the essential features we wish to deal with in these camps subject to adjustments according to local conditions. We may also produce pamphlets in simple language on all subjects dealt with by us in these camps such as can be easily intelligible to the participants and their fellow villagers.

A STEP FORWARD

I bumped by sheer accident across the realisation that "what is right should look right from whichever angle one looks at it." The programme we have drawn up for your consideration seems to conform to this definition fully. I have somehow a feeling that in this new approach, if we comprehend its significance and rise big enough in stature to implement it in the spirit that the situation today calls for, we have evolved as significant a step forward in this people's programme as the programme of Community Development and National Extension Service represented over the routine pattern of governmental administration.

May I assure you in all humility that there is hardly anything new in the above programme? Camps had been held loosely and on *ad hoc* basis according to the best judgement of our local workers in different States. What is proposed new is an integrated approach based on our pooled experiences to-date. It is only a dead man who is born with the last word on life. Wisdom consists in the maintenance of the child's outlook on life and of unrelenting struggle to discover ever-fresh stimulus to victory from every seeming defeat.

That we have failed to make technical agencies and non-official representatives the equal partners in our pilgrimage can be denied by the blind alone. That we are determined to forge ahead with fresh approaches to this problem which has baffled us, is to my mind the most unmistakable sign of our vitality. A government programme has grown unwittingly into a "Mission". India's culture has derived its roots from the mighty mountains and the giant rivers. It is significant therefore that we will meet again at the cradle of the Himalayas travelling along the banks of the Ganga in quest of the blessings with which we need to charge ourselves afresh.

Till we meet!

IV

April 20, 1957.

I wish you not to feel perturbed about this intrusion rather out of season. Circumstances called for it. I thought I should share with you what is passing in our collective mind on the eve of the conference, so that you might also do some further concentrated thinking on your way to Mussoorie. You will have received by now several bundles of notes covering the Agenda of the Development Commissioners' Conference. These have been prepared with extraordinary care. More collective thinking has gone into these documents than ever before. The remaining notes are in the process. These should reach you before you leave for, or immediately after you arrive at Mussoorie. I will seek your earnest attention to the contents of these notes and will look forward to contribution from you on these during the conference so that after the conference is over, we may prepare a revised handbook which can serve as an agreed guide to all our workers. You will note that we have tried to integrate the Community Development Programme, every facet of it, with the activities of other departments as set out under the second Five-Year Plan. Although belated, this to me is a welcome development.

The forthcoming conference at Mussoorie, you will perhaps recognise, promises to be a unique step forward in the sense that this conference unlike any other held under the government at any time will be attended not merely by the Development Commissioners but by representatives practically of all nation-building departments of all States. Apart from officials, we shall have a fair representation of the members of the Planning Commission and the members of the Central Council of Ministers, besides an appreciable number of important non-officials. What is still more significant is the fact that the Prime Minister has also decided to participate in the conference in person for an appreciable part of it. I am sure you will share my joy over it as also my anxiety to justify our claims on the success we have so far achieved in thinking and in action, as also over the fateful plunge we are about to take into the next chapter.

While we shall discuss and review operations as we have done in past years, the particular point on which a decision is to emerge out of this conference is how to enlist wider partnership in our pilgrimage, and share the initiative which has been our monopoly thus far, with the new partners—officials as well as non-officials. We have taken

a significant step forward by entrusting the programme of women and children to the Central Social Welfare Board who will now be working in the closest of collaboration with us. No programme can endure unless it is accepted as their own by women. Therefore the development that has taken place was not a day too early. The Central Social Welfare Board is primarily a women's organisation. Instead of competition in the same field, we have chosen the path of co-operation. This is significant of our maturity as an organisation.

I had the opportunity of attending the recent conference at Delhi of the Chairmen of the State Social Welfare Boards. The Chairman and I explained the full implications of the new arrangement. The Central Social Welfare Board and their co-workers in the States have grown fully alive to their new responsibilities. I hope, our co-workers at various levels will grow equally alive to the need for complete trust and understanding so that the predominantly official organisation in the agency of Community Development and the predominantly non-official organisation under the Central Social Welfare Board can work together to a common destiny so far as women and children are concerned, and thereby set the pattern for similar arrangements to follow in other fields.

The village leaders' training programme which I envisaged in my last monthly letter to you will appear to have had universal appeal in the country. I have discussed the proposal with many a stalwart. It will look basically sound on all counts. What is required now is to work out a step-by-step procedure for implementation so that the giant undertaking can be translated not merely in form but more specially, in spirit. For this I count on your pooled wisdom and experience. These village leaders' camps, linked with the new series of seminars and travels—intra-State and inter-State—supported further by the Informal Consultative Committees of the members of the State Legislature and Parliament we now envisage, should help us to energise, and enlist participation alike by, both technical agencies and

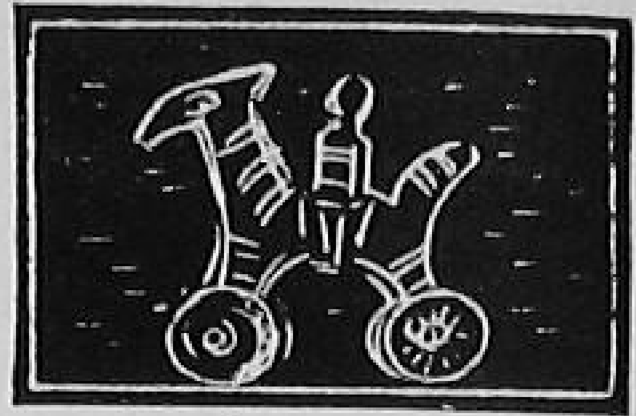
non-official representatives of people. We seem at last to have discovered the answer we have long been looking for. We know, we can work it out in practice.

I have chosen to inflict this letter on you on the eve of your departure for Mussoorie because I thought, you and your colleagues from the States would wish to know the latest point of our thinking as also the importance that is attached to the forthcoming deliberations, as signified by the Prime Minister's unsolicited acceptance of participation in this fateful conference. The new Central Cabinet is already in position. The coordination of the activities of this Ministry with those of the Ministry of Food & Agriculture is going ahead at a fast and smooth pace. We expect similar coordination with other Development Ministries in the Centre so that the Ministry of Community Development can, in profession as also in practice, serve in the years to come as the catalyst mouthpiece for the government as a whole so far as its relations with the people on the ground are concerned.

There is harder work ahead no doubt, but there awaits also an infinitely more thrilling adventure. In this, as far as we can see from the portents, we shall no longer be alone.

V

May 4, 1957.



I am proceeding on a fairly long tour of the South tomorrow morning. So I hasten to meet my monthly engagement with you, or else I may miss it altogether this month, now that the Parliament also will be in session from the 13th. I hate to alter on a discipline which is self-imposed.

You will have been back by now from Mussoorie and immersed in the rugged prose of the day-to-day grind that our job imposes on us. So much has been done in this conference and such significant strides have been made in our journey forward, that I find it difficult to resist the temptation, even at the risk of repetition, of summing up the points that emerged and which must needs command our immediate attention if we are to be, in the words of the Prime Minister, "in step-with" the time.

The programme is ready on all counts to step into the next phase, from the administrative phase as we have seen heretofore, to the technical phase which is yet to come. The technical phase constitutes the middle stage between the administrative phase at one end and the people's phase at the other which is our destination. It is so because the generalised services which the administrative agency can offer are by virtue of their definition limited both in content and character. If the services are to correspond with the crying needs of the people especially those that relate to production in the field of agriculture and allied subjects on one side and village industries on the other, it is the revitalised technical agencies who alone can fill the gap.

If technical agencies are to be brought into the picture, with their own initiative acting as the motive force, it is of utmost importance that we on behalf of the administrative agency even go out of our way if needs be, to provide the dignity which should belong to the technicians. The stamp of backwardness in us which is symbolised by the abnormal importance enjoyed by the administrative agency in this country must be removed and replaced by the sense of comradery which is inherent in any system of balanced growth wherein the technician and the administrator march together hand in hand. It is here that the revolutionary character of the movement gets manifest in all its bearings. Power seldom divests itself without coercion. India,

however, charted a different track for herself and proved to the consternation of many that such a transformation is possible. The Gramdan movement we talked so much about is based wholly on this thesis. I am convinced beyond a shadow of doubt that we are man enough—from the Gram Sevaks to the Ministers—to rise to the occasion and surrender the little tempting self within, in favour of the bigger self that cries for us without.

The transition from the administrative phase to the technical phase can be as short as we alone can wish to make it. The lack of experience in our technical functionaries, especially those at levels nearer the ground, can be made up fast enough if the technical functionaries can make common cause with the illiterate but wise masses in our villages who are crying to share our burden of thinking and acting. We should be prepared to squat with them on the common grass minus the vestment and armours till now associated with us. Villagers' camps, we have decided to confine in the first instance to the group covering agriculture, animal husbandry, irigation and cooperation, will involve all the functionaries in the Block and can make a significant start if the departments concerned from the headquarters down to the Block level can be geared to a planned programme. This programme should commence universally in all Blocks on October 2, 1957, onwards. We should get ready with all plans and procedures during the intervening period. The B.D.O.'s job as the coordinator will define itself automatically if this planned programme for the involvement of the people can make a start in the spirit in which it has been conceived, and not as a ritual. Camps on other subjects will follow as a logical course, if the first series of camps deliver what these are designed to.

We have taken a decision to have subject-matter seminars for our staff hereafter as against the administrative seminars conducted so far. CPA seminars will begin from the month of October. If these are to be realistic it is essential that State seminars from the ground upwards should begin from right now. This way alone the agenda of the CPA seminars can be based on problems and solutions that evolve through deliberations from grass roots. I count on you for this consummation. Our ministry is now engaged in a feverish effort to let you have the summary of conclusions and recommendations of the conference latest by the 18th of this month. The detailed papers supporting these will be ready for the press by end of May and should be in your hands latest by end of July.

We have had this year the singular experience of what we may call the beginning of the National Conference on Development with Heads of Departments of States associated with it in full strength. This can have a meaning only if the deliberations to which the Prime Minister has contributed so much through his active participation, can travel down the line upto the village level. You will be glad to know that we are having a meeting of all staff in the ministry this very afternoon

to analyse the impact of this conference and the actions that are expected of us. May I commend the same to you? I would suggest that you begin with a conference of all heads of departments at the State headquarters by about the end of this month on the basis of the conclusions and recommendations which you will have received from us by then. The same process can repeat at the districts where the Collector will conduct a full day's discussions or if needs be even longer, over the conclusions of this conference with the representatives of departments, the B.D.Os and S.D.Os/R.D.Os in the district. This process can be further followed at the level of the R.D.O. or the S.D.O. with the Block Development Officers, the Block Extension Officers and the district heads of departments. At the Block level the same can repeat with the Block Development Officer holding a conference with all Extension Officers and the Gram Sevaks.

The Ministry of Food & Agriculture have approved during the conference the proposal of concentrating the resources of the agriculture and allied departments in the States with a priority in the order of the post-intensive Blocks, intensive Blocks, National Extension Service Blocks and other areas. We have undertaken to assure that the entire organisation at the Block level will be geared for the challenge of 50 per cent increased output in irrigated and 30 per cent in unirrigated areas in the NES and Community Project Blocks. To me a challenge accepted is a challenge met. This organisation stands or falls by its fulfilment of the target or otherwise. A failure is unthinkable, for that would mean not merely a collapse of this movement but of the whole democratic structure of society we now visualise. More is at stake in this vital challenge we have accepted, than I can describe. I have no doubt that we will achieve the target and even exceed it. The only way it can be done is by rationalising the resources, decentralising the initiative to the technical agencies and making common cause with the village people themselves. We are determined to do this and I call for one more spurt of a giant drive from you in this direction. On my part, I promise, I will do my share with a "do or quit" resolve.

VI

June 22, 1957.

The new Parliament session begins again middle of July. These sessions impose drastic limitations on my programmes away from headquarters, especially those that have to be of a long duration. I have, therefore, programmed to use the interval between the last session and the coming one, to be with my friends and co-workers in the fields as extensively as I can. The mercury has been rising sharply. This imposes a further limitation on our effort. Yet I see people burning themselves out in the mid-day sun in the pursuit of our common mission. I find it difficult to resist the temptation of sharing their fate to the extent I can bear, whatever the prompting from within to get away for a short respite.

Once again I would appeal to you to arrange for a programme of vacation for all your workers including yourself. It is desirable even in the interest of the mission we pursue. It is no use flogging oneself as a rickshaw-puller does on continued uphill climbs. Respites are essential if we are to live and work to complete at least the foundation. I had the opportunity after a long time to take three days off at Almora. It has done me more good than I can describe. I discovered how desperate the need for rest that my own system demands, from the prompt relief this short rest brought me from the irritability I suffer. You will readily see why I feel so particular that this be arranged for others. I will try to take some longer period off as soon as I can build up the strength to enforce it on myself.

Before I left on my recent tour I had dictated a part of my letter to you. This was more or less a sequel to the Mussoorie Conference. We discussed a part of the substance of this letter when we met at Delhi on the 5th afternoon. I am taking the liberty of inflicting this letter on you as I thought you would find it useful. It should also be of interest to others in your organisation who did not have the opportunity to participate in the Mussoorie deliberations.

I have had a fairly exhaustive tour of the north-western part of Uttar Pradesh recently. It was a joy to see the amazing unity of purpose and understanding achieved by our workers on the programme especially those who are working nearer the ground. I go out again tomorrow evening on a marathon run across the new Madhya

Pradesh. I have not been to this region for months now and am already feeling out of touch with the soil and its people. I would write again when I have shaken the weight of Delhi wisdom off my mind with the *kaya kalp* touch that the soil alone can provide. Now to the letter I have referred to earlier.

We have had the first meeting of the Informal Consultative Committee of Parliament. Despite the fact that the meeting was held at 12 noon, almost all members attended the meeting. The enthusiasm each member displayed over the Community Development Programme was something over which we could all rejoice. It was the unanimous opinion that we should hold these meetings every quarter and should provide sufficient time for frank and detailed discussion on the programme. The subject for discussion this time was the "Conclusions and Recommendations of the Development Commissioners' Conference."

Members expressed their desire to spend some time in visiting projects in their State during the intervals between Parliamentary sessions. They are eager to acquaint themselves with all facets of the programme on the ground so that they could also endeavour to make their contribution as representatives of the people. This indeed is a happy augury. I have no doubt that the State Consultative Committees when set up will react equally warmly and that our programme will stand to gain correspondingly in the sector in which we have had our conspicuous weakness namely the association of non-officials.

PARLIAMENT AND N.C.C.D.

When we discussed at Mussoorie that the Development Commissioners' Conference thereafter would merge into the National Conference on Community Development what I had in view was that besides Development Commissioners we would have participation in these conferences in future of the technical heads of departments. Little did I realise then that there would be wider interest in its proceedings. You will be glad to know, it has been decided in the Parliament before the session adjourned this time that an early opportunity would be taken during the next session in July to have a full dress discussion on the recommendations and conclusions of the Development Commissioners' Conference and the Evaluation Report. Evaluation reports have already been circulated to members. The recommendations and conclusions of the Development Commissioners' Conference are now under print and will be circulated not only to members of the Parliament but also to members of the State Legislatures. From all indications it appears that this will be an annual feature. This means that the proceedings of the Development Commissioners' Conference cease to be merely those of a departmental conference. With the Parliament coming in to deliberate on the proceedings of the conference, the issues we grapple with, and the stature of the conference, acquire a new dimension with potentialities for far reaching repercussions on the programme as a whole. I know

you will welcome this new development and would also rejoice over the wider partnership that this connotes.

COORDINATION AT THE CENTRE

I had mentioned some time ago that we were establishing an arrangement for coordination of our activities with those of the ministries in the Centre dealing with village and small-scale industries more or less on the line of the arrangement we had made with the Ministry of Food & Agriculture. Now that there is one single ministry at the Centre, namely the Ministry of Commerce & Industry holding the entire village and small-scale industries programme, we have already finalised the procedure for coordination. The first coordination committee meeting was held on the eighth afternoon. This committee for coordination headed by the Minister of Commerce & Industry will also take over the action committee which we have been conducting under this ministry. The village and small-scale industries programme which has been presenting such complexities so far, promises to move in future with an accelerated tempo. The new coordination committee in the Centre should ease your burden. We have issued the recommendations of the Development Commissioners' Conference to the respective ministries in the Centre. The aim is to achieve full coordination between the activities of this ministry with those of the respective ministries in the Centre.

COORDINATION IN THE STATES

The Committee on Plan Projects (COPP) is laying special emphasis in its study of our programme on the question of administrative coordination which we have been talking about, ever since we began in October, 1952. The Programme Evaluation Organisation is making a study of administrative coordination as its main plank of evaluation for the next year. We have taken certain steps as indicated above. Your task will be a lot easier if you can start, as you might have done already, a similar circle of discussions with the heads of departments in the State, get their formal concurrence to the main conclusions and recommendations. Now that we have something concrete to work on, administrative coordination should begin to be a real action programme based on "participation" as against the theory of "cooperation !". I do hope you will invest the time and effort called for. It will pay more dividends in the long run than is apparent now. Once this round of discussions at the State headquarters is complete, similar cycle may repeat through the Collector and the Block Development Officers. We shall supply you sufficient quantities of printed copies of the conclusions and recommendations for circulation to all others along the line.

TECHNICAL ADVISERS IN THE MCD

We have done all we could in the limited context heretofore. We will devote ourselves hereafter with the respective ministries in the Centre on the one hand and their counterparts in the States, namely,

the heads of departments, on the other. Our technical advisers will, of course, maintain their contacts with the Development Commissioner's organisation, but the primary contact hereafter will be with their technical counterparts in the States. Even their visits to the field are expected to be made in collaboration with them.

WORK AND GUIDANCE IN THE FIELD

The acute neglect that I discover in our administrative guidance to the field is due to the absence of adequate supervision, technical as well as administrative. The programme has grown far beyond the personal attention of individual Development Commissioners or their deputies. Collectors, as we know, are busy with their day to day problems. It is of the utmost importance that Collectors be supported by visits to districts of the heads of departments. When heads of departments are in the districts they should call a meeting of all the extension officers upto the Block level for discussion on the programme in the presence of the Collector. If this can repeat for all the departments on the basis of a planned programme covering all the districts, not only the question of administrative coordination at all levels but even the tempo of the programme will receive a new push.

What with planning and reporting and what with the other activities emanating from various sources, Development Commissioners are equally weighed down. Even so, tour of districts between Development Commissioners and the Joint and Deputy Development Commissioners will have to be made a planned feature of field supervision. This is necessary as much for the vitality of the field programme as for the Development Commissioner's own organisation maintaining the pulse of the programme. Tour programme can be planned on a combined study of sample blocks with group discussion at district or divisional headquarters with all the administrative functionaries upto the Block level. I am following the same for myself.

OUR GRAM SEVAKS

Gram Sevaks, we have been claiming, are the key to the programme. I am told that the quality of Gram Sevaks is deteriorating because of the rapid expansion in our programme. I do not know what steps we take in States for the recruitment of Gram Sevaks. It does not seem good enough to send an advertisement in newspapers. Newspapers happily or unhappily do not yet travel into the interior of our countryside. The high schools in villages have begun to produce matriculates out of farmers' sons. We should make every effort to see that such boys and girls are attracted to our programme. The only way this can be done will be to send advance notices of our recruitment of Gram Sevaks through the Collector and the Block Development Officer, so that every village in the Blocks could receive the news of recruitment through community notice boards. This will work also for good public relations.

MEETING OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE

We had a meeting of the Central Committee shortly after the Mussoorie Conference. Our office has sent you proceedings of the meeting for your information. While many questions have been discussed in this meeting including the conclusions and recommendations of the Mussoorie Conference, the Prime Minister laid special emphasis on refresher training for all our workers now in the field, especially the Gram Sevaks. I find happily that some States have already undertaken programmes for refresher training in camps of Gram Sevaks. Our office is writing to States to let us have their experiences on this matter so that we could pool the information for a detailed study at the Centre on the basis of which we can work out a new all-India scheme for this purpose. Meantime, I hope you will do some thinking on this vital matter yourself.

PULL AGAINST GRAVITY

Everyone concedes that our effort in India and especially the one relating to our Community Development Programme is one of lifting the people against gravity from the abyss into which we had fallen as a people. Pull against gravity means physical strength in enormous measures. It means naturally that together with quality we must have quantity if we are to develop the requisite momentum. Adequacy of staff to man our programme at every level grows, therefore, to be a matter of supreme importance. The Central Committee in its meeting had been specially concerned over this issue. They have asked for a special meeting to discuss this subject after we have prepared a comprehensive note indicating the present position of manpower for our projects, the steps that we have taken to build up the necessary potential and the additional help, if any, that we require from the Planning Commission to meet our demand. My office, I understand, has already written you on the subject. I do hope, you will review the position in all aspects, qualitative as well as quantitative.

THE VEHICLE ON THE MOVE

Some of my friends may feel intrigued at the emphasis I often place on the role of technical functionaries in our programme. I do so because this is a matter of crucial importance today, and we as a people should rise big enough in stature to acknowledge our shortcomings and then gird our loins to overcome them. Whether it is a Minister in the Centre or a Patwari at the village level, all are servants at the behest of the people. They should receive compliments and ovations strictly corresponding to the men they are and how they discharge their role as artists in the employ of the people. Any special importance that is attached to the vestment of their office is something unreal, and to the extent that it exists, it can only detract from their ultimate effectiveness. The drive launched recently against pomp and ceremonies in government is a pointer in that direction.

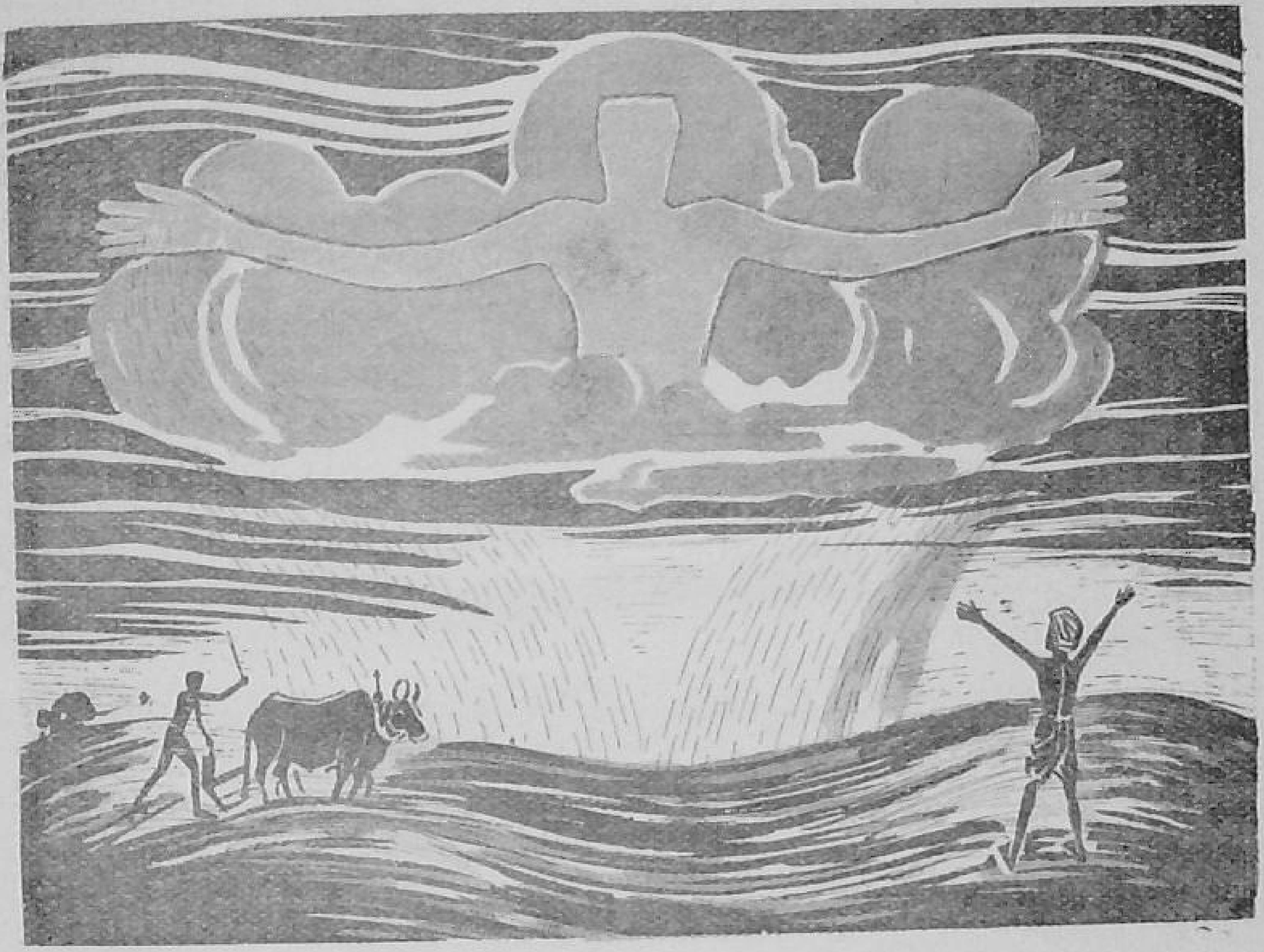
We have already taken measures to attract wider partnership in our pilgrimage. Technical functionaries are our first partners in the

government apparatus. Non-official representatives of people are the second group of partners. Our people symbolise the vehicle of India on the move. The people's representatives constitute the crank shaft which transmits the motion to the moving parts. Technical functionaries represent the moving parts. Administrators provide the transmission system with appropriate lubricant at every joint. Good administration, if I understand administration at all, should be like good health. Health means a sense of exuberance and a complete unawareness of the body. Good administration like good health is expected to impart that sense of exuberance to the system.

It is not in the tradition of India to pull down any one. Our socialist pattern means the raising of those down and out, towards those who stand ahead and above. In the process we try of course to remove wide disparities. It would be suicidal to pull the administrators down, as people not unoften try to do. What we need however, is to pull up the others who are complements to the administrators and with whom alone the administrator can weave the fabric of what is known as administration. The administrator of today should consider himself fortunate that destiny has entrusted this epic role to him—to pull others to his own level and build up a wider base for administration as his main term of reference. False vestments do credit neither to those who don them nor to those who watch and admire the phantoms.

VII

July 25, 1957.



The monsoon at last has broken. It brings relief to agriculturists and others alike; and thus we step into the next link of the year's cycle. Agriculturists plan for crops, health workers against epidemics. We have to plan for implementation of decisions we took in our seminars and conferences, also for the next series of seminars to begin immediately after the monsoon. "Every year is like every other" say the protagonists of the *status quo*, the cynics and the idlers alike. The cycle helps the illusion. Yet a slightly deeper thought will confirm that the cycle as a whole is on the move. Especially in our case it is moving fairly fast.

I have been touring extensively as you are aware during the past one month. I am glad about it. It has helped to bring me more up-to-date with our problems as it always does and I certainly feel stronger despite the rush. I have incidentally discovered a holiday resort for you all, apart from others who hail to India for holiday from abroad. It is in Jammu & Kashmir. You will hear more about it when the place has been developed further, as I hope it will. I have no doubt it has potentialities for developing into one of the finest hill stations in the world. The place is of added interest to me as it also falls in an N.E.S. Block. Incidentally, we are hoping to hold one of the inter-State seminars this year in Jammu & Kashmir. You will hear about it soon. I should now tell you something that directly

relates to our work which flows from my study of the programme on the ground.

TEHSILDAR'S PARADISE TO PANCHAYATS

I have travelled across a fair cross-section of our projects in a number of States. In a good section of a State I discovered a galaxy of Tehsildars working as B.D.Os. for us, from within their ivory towers waiting for people to come to them to make applications for funds. I discovered to my dismay that we had lost good Tehsildars who would have otherwise done some solid work in matters of revenue and had instead positively bad B.D.Os. who showed no understanding of the fact that the B.D.O.'s job primarily was one of "Mohammad going to the mountain" and not the other way about. Fortunately, this situation related only to a section of a State. How it could happen even in a section of a State so extensively is however, something that I find difficult to understand. Anyway, correctives are being applied and the situation should be improved before long. I am mentioning this to you because I thought there might be pockets in every State where this phenomenon would obtain, and you may like to examine your programme accordingly.

On the other side I discovered developments which should be of special interest to you. We have been talking for years now of vesting our work in Panchayats. This I saw in operation in one State. Here, the Block funds, the bulk of them, have been divided equitably between the Panchayats in the Block with allocations under different heads of development. The residual part of the Block budget is reserved for special programmes as reward to the best-functioning villages. This has created wide-spread satisfaction in the villages and has resulted in whole-hearted active participation. Panchayats have treated the allocations made to them as "nuclear funds" to which they have added substantially through cash, kind and labour. Arguments about "ek tihai aur do tihai, or adha adha" were conspicuous by their absence. Work has been substantial, and people's contribution far ahead of government share. The burden of routine on the Block staff has eased significantly. Unfortunately the funds of other departments could not be distributed likewise; otherwise it would have been a model programme so far as we are concerned. Efforts are being made to bring this about. I shall arrange facilities for our workers in other parts of India to see and study this development when the time is ripe.

It struck me meanwhile that with the fair degree of administrative coordination such as has already been established in most of the States by now, we may try out this experiment in a few Blocks so that when we meet for the next interim conference of Development Commissioners in October or November, we may be able to examine this and take such decisions as our experiences justify. To me it appears that this could be one of the ways in which we can correct the disparities in accomplishments between different areas in a Block which the Evaluation Report has brought out, and at the same time enable ourselves to implement the recommendation we have made in successive

Development Commissioners' conferences of entrusting the responsibilities for planning and implementation to Panchayats. In other words, instead of the Block being the unit we have been talking about, this proposal means in practice a step further in making the Panchayat circle the unit of development. It will also mean compliance with the demand made by Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, ever since this programme began that there should be a panchayat and a co-operative for every village, and that we should transfer the initiative of development to these bodies as the main term of reference under this programme. I know, the distance between the Tehsildar's paradise to a panchayat is a fairly long one. But distances, we know today, are relative to the mode of travel and the traveller.

CAN WE MISS A TERM ?

Expenditure on our programme, I find, is again coming down although the setback is still not very marked. It is because of the fact that not unoften, new Blocks are being opened as a ritual without the full complement of staff, even of trained Gram Sevaks. Apart from expenditure, such beginnings tend to stunt development and social education of people and cannot but act as a permanent handicap to the programme. We have throughout insisted that although an allotment is made to a State, Blocks should be opened only when the full staff is in position. I am sorry, this is not being honoured to the extent we thought we had a claim to expect. Now that we are going to cover the country as a whole by end of the Second Plan, there should be no reason why we should make any compromises on this question even under pressure. We have been thinking lately whether it will not be a wise step to miss a six-monthly allotment of N.E.S. Blocks in order to complete the staffing in the Blocks already under operation. During the period, we may be able also to take care of the refresher's training of under-trained personnel. It has not been our practice to take a unilateral decision in such matters. I should like to do this only in consultation with you and I am mentioning this here so that you can also do some serious thinking. We should be able to come to a decision when we meet at the next conference during the winter. This skipping of a half-yearly allotment should not mean any serious upset to our target of coverage as I feel that we should be able to take up work at an accelerated pace, once we set our existing house in order. It is, therefore, a choice between expansion in diluted operation or a temporary concentration with an increased tempo to follow later. You hold the charge. You should be able to tell which course will be in the ultimate interest of the programme.

ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

The anniversary issue of 'Kurukshetra' is scheduled as in past years to come out on October 2. Now that the editor and the staff are functioning with us in the same building, we are trying to bring it more in tune with our programme. The editor has already sent to you his specifications for the anniversary issue; I would seek your personal attention to the subject.

CHILDREN'S DAY APPROACHES AGAIN

With the present size of our programme and the momentum that it has developed, children's day this year, namely November 14, should give an account in our projects far ahead of what we have attempted or achieved in previous years. This is a day which we can dedicate to the coming generation and can utilise for rousing as much response as we can, over activities relating to children. I do hope you will kindly issue necessary instructions to the Block staff and also follow up personally to see that children's day this year is reflective of the stature of the movement. The gifts can follow the pattern as in the past.

VILLAGE INDUSTRIES AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Village industries still continue to be the weakest feature in our programme. Despite the coordination that has been brought about between the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Community Development, the biggest problem relating to village industries remains one of marketing of the produce. Village industries by the very definition are industries run on small and cottage scales meant for villages. Therefore, industries have to be planned primarily for local needs. This can happen if a certain amount of patriotism is generated deliberately for consumption of local products. Care has to be taken necessarily that the industries sponsored are such as will cater to the local clientele. The atmosphere is already charged both in towns and villages for expansion in housing activities despite the shortage of cement. This shortage will not remain after the end of the Second Five-Year Plan even though the position is acute at the moment. We should, therefore, promote industries that cater to housing including the burning of lime. This is a fairly safe proposition. Bee-keeping, sericulture, poultry, fruit-processing, are kinds of activities which will also find a fairly sure market both local as well as outside. We should also provide better techniques and better implements to existing artisans and see that new artisans come in who will produce parts for and maintain improved appliances like tubewell pumps, agricultural implements, improved looms, Ambar Charkha, etc.

Khadi has been claimed to be the prince of village industries; but the prince will suffer the lot of the ex-princes of India unless our own workers and their close associates from amongst the village leaders take to the wearing of khadi if not for sentiments, at least on the ground that this is a local product and every copper that is spent on it goes to provide employment to people who would have otherwise been dependent on private charities or doles from government. This, however, is a matter that cannot be settled through an official mandate. Our Development Commissioners, Collectors and others, I find, are becoming habitual khadi wearers. If we are to propagate local self-sufficiency even as an interim economic measure, we should have study circles and discussions first amongst our own workers on the economic and social implications of this programme of self-sufficiency. We should then involve the village panchayats and cooperatives in the planning and implementation of the programme. Village industries,

may I repeat, offer the only promise if permanent relief is to be provided to the depressed and scheduled classes and the landless. Other measures are but palliatives.

VILLAGE LEADERS' CAMPS

We are going ahead in this ministry making our observations on village camps of farmers in neighbouring areas. We also are awaiting your comments on the camps held in your State so that on the basis of the pooled experiences we can write a draft manual taking care of the basic essentials which can be observed by your workers in the far-flung corners of the State when these camps are organised on a mass scale on October 2, as we desire. You will, I hope, agree that no concept in life grows big because of any intrinsic merit in the concept itself. A concept grows big according to how it is worked out in the life of people in its content and character. If these camps are not to end in a ritual as they very easily can in a mass-operation government apparatus such as ours in India, we have to make this a human experiment and, if I may say so, a "sadhana" for each one of us at his own level. A friend of mine in this ministry has brought to my notice very rightly that while we are trying to plan with a precision about the holding of the camps, we have not given much thought to what happens after it as a follow-up, and how precisely we expect the campers to function after the completion of the camps. I pleaded guilty, and am now eager to fill that gap. The draft manual we send out will incorporate this vital section also.

The more I think about this functional camp which we have now agreed to, the more I see it in action in the field, the more convinced I feel about the totally revolutionary character of this one single step that we have forged out of our past experiences. I realise also that despite our claims so far and the bouquets we have received, our programme till now has been one of mere development. The village leaders' functional camp we now envisage on a mass scale on October 2, is the first significant step forward in the direction of community development. Personally I am not bothered much about the second step. If the first step is right, it will inevitably lead to the second. That this is the first logical step is something of which I am as convinced as I am of the fact that I am a human being alive and kicking. I wish, you would share my faith in this, even in trust, you will not regret.

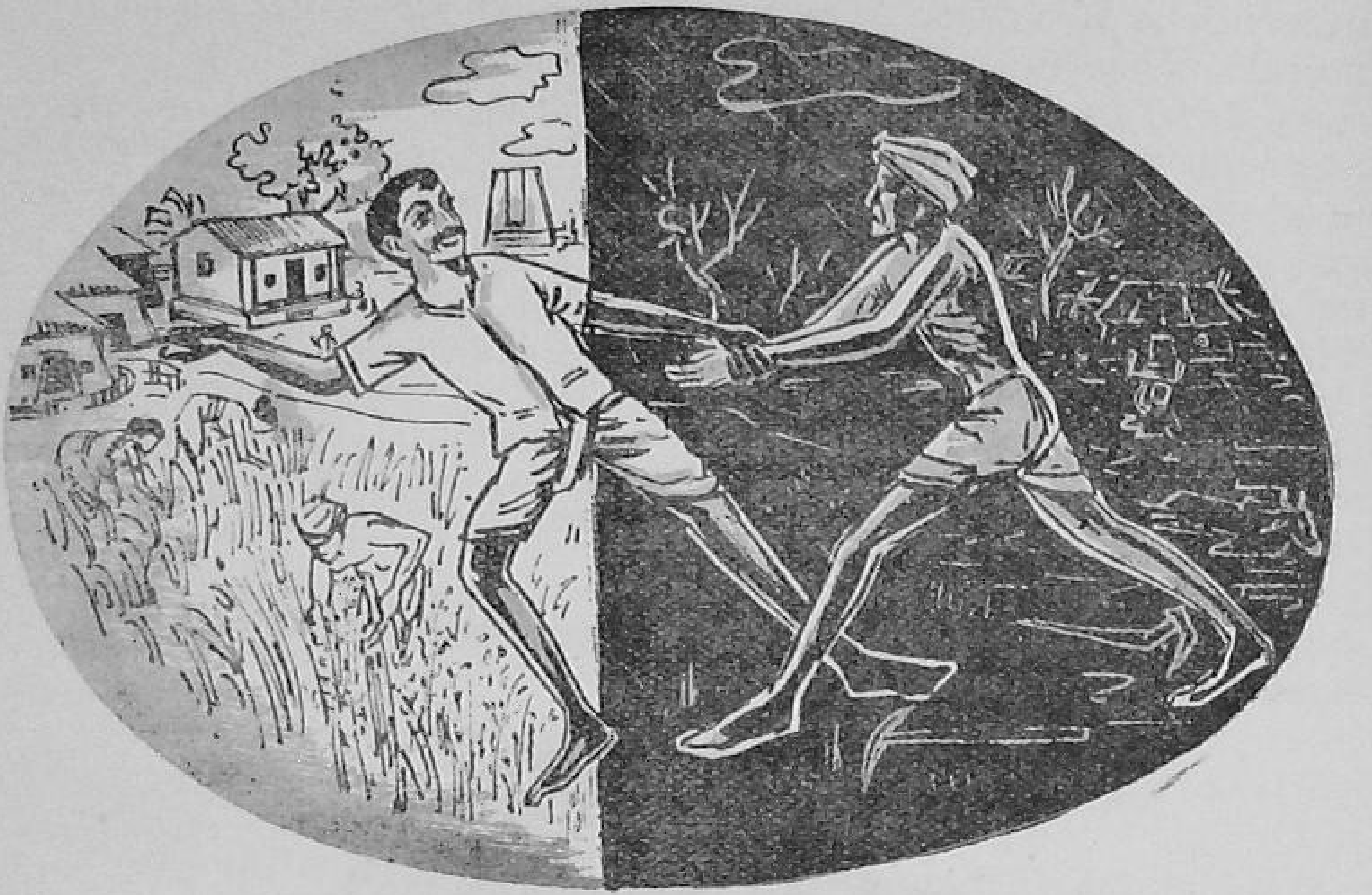
THE NEW CHAPTER

So the new chapter is unfolding. The Planning Secretary-*cum*-Development Commissioner ceases to be the head of a new department. Instead he grows to be the 'Brother' he was to be to help others grow *together* in the shade of the umbrella he holds under the *charter*. I am now going all out to see that the members of Parliament are fully drawn into this programme for the contribution which is theirs alone. The budget debate this week I hope will give me an opportunity of placing my appeal to the hon'ble members of Parliament on your behalf for their support which is the programme's due. I hope to

follow this up with members of the State Legislatures also. Meantime I would only ask you to see that the Consultative Committee of the State Legislators may be made as effective a body as possible. The effect of these on the programme will be something that will be of tremendous advantage to you as also to the movement although the transitional phase may appear to add further to your burden. Democracy can have no meaning unless our leaders and representatives of people at all levels can learn to provide the leadership. I see Fascism unadulterated, staring round the corner, unless this can be achieved and soon. This programme alone provides the opportunity for representatives and leaders to train themselves in functions they profess. The "basically revolutionary character" which the Prime Minister claims for this programme lies in this; equally so, in the fact that the vast majority on whose shoulders a minority has travelled for ages without paying the hire are now in the process of being educated to claim their dues. This has nowhere been attempted, much less achieved. We aim to build a "home" for the "family of India". We have succeeded in erecting the scaffolding. The work for the mansion should now begin. We must not be found wanting.

VIII

August 20, 1957.



1857–1947–1957 .

Another August 15 is gone. What do the records show of 'Yesterday' and the stars portend for the 'Tomorrow' in the offing ?

A nation comprising diverse races and religions from the primitive to the enlightened and inhabiting a million square miles of the richest geography on earth had been descending the *khud* for thousand years and more. It was a house divided against itself and corroded to the core. Principalities and splinter groups one fighting the other on the flimsiest of excuses, till we fell prey to the surging waves of a new imperialism hailing from the West. Yet it did not take the molten crowd more than a hundred years to pick its nerves and muscles and wage a mass war on the invader in 1857. But alas ! the rot had gone too deep within. The revolt was shortlived. Those who led the movement had little roots on the soil. The people who alone can sustain the sinews of a war of liberation were not there woven in an *institutional pattern* which could endure. The strangle-hold was only further tightened.

But the stranger from abroad committed the folly of planning to remain a stranger to this land. The gulf between the ruler and the ruled grew wider still. It took nearly three decades for a new surge of revolt to come up. It found its expression in what we know as the Indian National Congress with its long years of strifes, struggles and travail. 1947 came and with it the fateful midnight of August 15.

We grew free from the shackles of foreign rule, but the slavery of the nation still persists. For, hunger, disease and ignorance are enemies deadlier to conquer. The battle for the new freedom is still on. It has to reach newer heights. Those that have gone before in the battle for liberation from foreign rule are but few in number compared to those that have still to burn their substance in the new fire, if the nation as a whole to the last man is to be purged of the virus that eats into its vitals.

Yet as we look back at what has been achieved during the ten years since August 15, 1947, it is something that cannot but appear amazing if the panorama can be viewed against the perspective of the cosmic movement. Personally, I am singularly lucky because it is on August 15, 1947, that I left the old world behind, and plunged in the search of a new one. Ten years have gone. The quest is still on. Yet looking in the mirror I fail to recognise myself. I find it difficult equally to recognise the hundreds and thousands of others who struggle alongside, whom I have known and worked with during these years. Servants of government, many amongst whom were erstwhile agents of the colonial government we fought, constitute today a New Order. It was unthinkable that this could happen. Yet it has. That I can pour my soul out in its agonies in this cold print despite the predominant character of this frigid apparatus in which we function, is a proof enough, if any was needed, of the change that slowly but steadily is overtaking us.

DEVELOPMENT VIS-A-VIS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

I wrote to you in my last letter that I was going all out to extend an invitation on behalf of you all to the members of Parliament during the debate on Budget Grants. It was time, they came to invest the soul to the scaffolding we had erected through the government organisation and the mud and mortar we had already placed in position. As you have read in the Press, the debate came. It raged for six full hours, perhaps a little longer. Vigorous views were voiced in the House, that this programme which was professed to be one of Community Development continued as a programme of development with initiative still in the hands of government. That the people who are the masters, and their institutions which were to take over the initiative from government so as to use the government apparatus as its own tool at its own behest, was a consummation not only not there but could not even be seen in the making. At best it has been a grants-in-aid government programme with little progress in the economic sector especially for those who needed an economic boost most. That even in what was achieved a lot more could be had at the same expenditure if the government apparatus functioned with understanding, sympathy and what it must have by its charter, competence.

For obvious reasons, in my reply to the debate during which I talked for an hour and a quarter, I did not contradict seriously the criticisms made on the floor of the House. I did not do so as I could not disagree with the core of the complaints made although a lot could

be said on the issues that were peripheral. Instead, I chose as a spot decision, to surrender myself to the House and speak to the members with my heart out free from all reservations as I do with all our co-workers in government. That I could talk so to a House to which I was still a virtual stranger and could be accepted for what I was in relation to the programme in its utter nudity, that the Budget Grants could be passed without even a murmur from any side following my infliction on its patience, that so large a number of M.Ps. have approached me since with offers of help on the ground if only I could suggest some concrete action to which they could dedicate themselves, is testimony enough that our representatives in the Parliament and must be equally so in the State Legislatures are aching equally for an opportunity to play their part in this mass operation people's movement which, though unleashed on their behalf, is yet to be harnessed on an enduring *institutional pattern*. Is there an offer from us—honest and earnest enough?

INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE IN PARLIAMENT

Before this week is over we propose to hold a meeting with our friends, the members of the Informal Consultative Committee of Parliament. We are analysing in the ministry the pertinent points raised in the debate, the immediate actions that can remedy the shortcomings in the programme wherever they exist. We are also formulating a proposal suggesting concrete measures of assistance that members of Parliament as the senior representatives of people can take in aid of this programme and on a role which can be theirs alone.

Till five years ago, the government apparatus excelled in the techniques of analysis as to the flaws that existed in any proposal. It had little mastery and no tradition to demonstrate how things could be done despite difficulties except of course in matters of law and order. To function with people with all their limitations, to evoke the best out of them and harness it to constructive purposes were a novelty only to be sneered at.

Yet the fact was, that the government apparatus was manned by the sons and daughters of the same nation that could produce the martyrs for the country's liberation. A chunk was taken out of the same apparatus and was charged with a mission in faith and trust. This chunk like the chunk out of the sun continued revolving and rotating for five weary years adding more and more to its bulk as it gyrated on the axis. Today as we see it, the government apparatus as a whole, cynics and idlers notwithstanding, is straining at the leash and struggling to stand and match the call of the hour. What has applied to the government apparatus in the programme of development, has necessarily to obtain equally in regard to the non-official sector represented in our Parliament, State Legislatures and other institutions down the line, if the development programme is to develop into the revolutionary movement of the community, which our Prime Minister has been calling for ever since the programme's inauguration.

CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE IN STATE LEGISLATURE

What applies in this context to the Parliament holds equally for the State Legislature. Informal Consultative Committees in the State Legislatures have to come in promptly, and be geared for the role which is even more intimately theirs in this movement of our rural people. After the forthcoming meeting of the Consultative Committee at the Centre we shall convey to you the decisions taken by the Central ministry following this consultation. You will have perforce to apply the same with such minor local adjustments as circumstances demand in regard to the State Consultative Committee. The State Consultative Committees cannot function in a vacuum. Institutions further down must come into being to work in collaboration. Village panchayats must necessarily be a live organ. We have no justification to call ourselves the sponsors of a Community Development Programme unless the base institution is made a reality.

To start with, the members of the State Consultative Committee will have to play the role of the elder brother to the members of these village institutions and guide, supervise and prod them as we do from higher levels of government to levels below. There is no other way out. That we have by now evolved the plan for a movement of the people's representatives strictly parallel to that of government officials in the discharge of this programme, intertwining one with the other at strategic junctions, shows that our basic approach is right. It is now a matter purely for implementation. There is very little desired by way of decisions.

BLOCK ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Informal Consultative Committees of Parliament or for that matter of the State Legislature cannot function unless the Block Advisory Committees which should be the counterparts of the State Legislature at the Block level are a functioning reality. We wrote you a long time ago, that cost what it may, Block Advisory Committees must include the chiefs of village panchayats. Where the number is too formidable, panchayats could elect their own representatives. In the biggest State of India, namely the Uttar Pradesh, this recommendation was put into immediate implementation. The results, I can declare boldly, have exceeded even my own expectations. But alas ! our recommendations have not been followed in spirit by all States. Nominations of panchayat representatives at the discretion of local officials is the ritual which has by and large been the upshot of the vital recommendation which was agreed to *in toto* in two successive conferences of Development Commissioners. How do we expect to make a people's programme if, even in the limited sphere of Block Advisory Committees, we are not prepared, ten years after our independence, to face the inevitable and make the people's representatives in the villages the arbiter of their destinies?

B.D.O. THE NEW FEUDAL PRINCE ?

India disposed of 550 feudal Indian States in the wake of Independence The rulers of Indian States have by now taken their place as

normal citizens. Are we sure that, with some significant exceptions, we are not creating in the major number of 6,000 blocks we propose to open in the country, a new feudal order with the B.D.O. as a new feudal monarch with the sanction of government not merely to be a master of the people but also of all government departments functioning alongside him, a feature which was not there even in the worst days of colonial rule ?

There is a power vacuum in the villages. The temptation for the B.D.O. to walk in and occupy this vacuum is great enough indeed. Is it not our duty, those who function above him to continue providing him nourishment, guidance and prodding where needs be, to keep him confined to his role of a mere coordinator between people on one side and government departments on the other ? This is a matter of very serious concern. You will understand what I have in view. The Tehsildar mentality in the B.D.O. should be relegated to the dead past and give place to the role of the catalyst, amidst those with whom he functions. With our lines of communications spread out far and wide, there is need for even greater vigilance if this anti-climax is to be avoided in the darkness that pervades the caste, creed and party-ridden villages in which we function.

FORTHCOMING VILLAGE CAMPS AND OUR MASTERS

I compliment you on the sincere efforts you are making in all directions to bring about a mass drive of village camps beginning on October 2, 1957. Our programmes at Kurnool and Rajgir for organising camps for the benefit of the trainers from States are going apace but M.C.D. holds no monopoly to wisdom. Its stock in trade is a collective one in which it is the States which provide the major part of the substance. If these camps are to be effective and the trainees also to be so on their return, you must be extremely circumspect in the selection of the trainees for the two camps which I presume you have been. Furthermore, the Development Commissioners and others in the two States where these camps are being held must come to our help by putting in their very best to supplement our efforts.

As I mentioned in my last letter these village camps are the forerunners at last of the effort that was overdue for the transformation of the dumb and mute in the villages into conscious and active masters of themselves. If democracy is to be, there is no escape from the fact that the ruled of 'Yesterday' have to be the rulers of 'Today'. Shall we, as an organisation, have the wisdom to carry out this campaign in the spirit that is called for ? My friends, there are other forces even apart from the Parliament and State Legislatures that I see are aching yonder to come to our aid. These forces will join in, if life is to survive.

We are on a historic campaign. Nothing like this has ever happened before and nothing like this shall happen for many a millennium. Are we alive to the role that Providence has bestowed on us ?

P.S.—I attach to this some "random thoughts" to which I would like to draw your attention.

"RANDOM THOUGHTS"

STATE GOVERNMENT VIS-A-VIS PARLIAMENT QUESTIONS

Since democracy has come to stay and there is no desire on the part of the people to substitute an alternative system, we must treat the Parliament and the State Legislatures with the respect and promptness of service which their position in the affairs of the nation demands. Parliament questions should be replied to by Ministers—firmly, fully and without reservations consistent with overall public interest. This is what I am determined to do. But how can I do it unless I get full facts from States in time? To an extent my own organisation in the ministry is not entirely free from blame. We should have most of the basic data at our command in the ministry if we are working the administrative intelligence section in particular in a right way and if we are prompt enough in making demands on States for information relating to Parliament questions. We are trying to improve the working of our own organisation in the ministry. I would same time plead for your prompt personal attention to Parliament questions. I cannot ask members of Parliament to be our ally unless I meet promptly and efficiently the demand for information which they make on the floor of the House.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH AND REPORTS FROM BLOCKS

I find from a study of work in the field that correspondence with B.D.O. on routine matters and demand for reports by various departments from the ground are mounting almost in geometric progression. This is a fatal trend. This organisation must be saved from being reduced to one of a dealer with papers. Now that the National Development Council in its last session has firmly and unequivocally approved the proposal of treating the Block as a unit for planning and development by government as a whole, our correspondence and reports on various heads must be coordinated and rationalised. Perhaps even our ministry is not entirely free from blame. But we are trying to improve, and our administrative intelligence system should grow to full stature if it is to avoid scandals. I say scandals because according to the quarterly report received from one State for quarter ending March 31, 1957, we are supposed to have employed as many people in our village industries programme in that State as the target for the country as a whole during the second Five-Year Plan. Obviously this is a blunder of a serious magnitude.

That this could pass the office of the Development Commissioner without being detected is a matter of pain and concern to me. Our bureaus of economics and statistics in the States should now begin to think in terms of developing into a full-fledged subject-matter department which could serve as the eyes and ears for government activities in the State as a whole. Our administrative intelligence system in the CPA should have given greater lead in this matter. I plead guilty

that we have not succeeded in the appropriate discharge of our role in this behalf. We are looking for the head of the organisation in administrative intelligence and taking interim steps which should improve things before long. But the States have a fairly large administrative intelligence system. These should be fully coordinated and linked up with the organisation at the district and block levels.

The Collector and S.D.Os., I am afraid, are also not playing their part in checking up reports against obvious fantasies, nor are they perhaps exercising the same vigilance over the performance at the field level as they, for instance, do in checking up treasury accounts and other operations as part of routine administration. This is a serious matter to which I would invite your early attention.

POST-INTENSIVE PHASE

The post-intensive phase is still causing us a good deal of torment as rumblings from areas here and there continue being heard by us. May I request you to let me have a very brief account addressed to me personally of what the position is in the post-intensive Blocks? If there are any residual problems I would like to help if I can. I have a claim to be of service to you in this vital matter as I maintain that our programme will be judged more by what we succeeded in doing in rationalising activities in these areas.

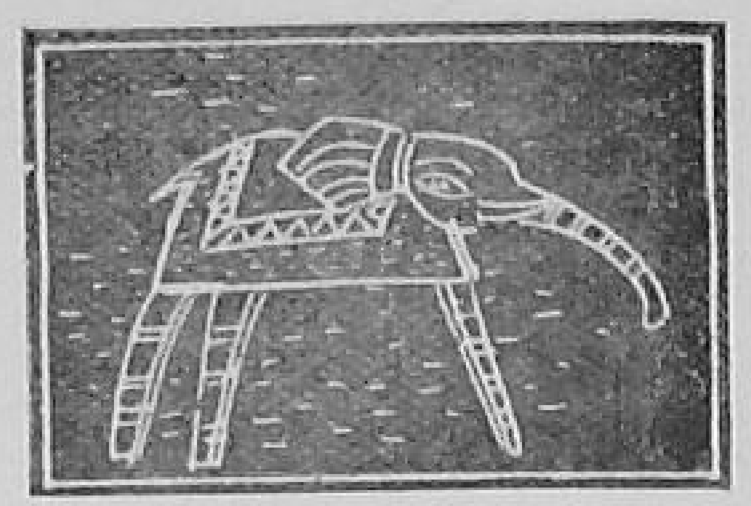
As for the future I hope we have learnt the lesson and will not act whether for planning or for implementation of a programme in isolation from departments of government or established institutions of people which alone can ensure permanency for the work done for items of development out of the individual Block budget.

SHRAMDAN DRIVE

While people in all parts of India have made substantial contribution to community works and works of individual development in varying degrees, Shramdan as an annual recurring mass operation has to the best of my knowledge been followed only in U.P. and Rajasthan. I plead, if I may, to place myself for a trial in your hands on this one point of community shramdan over the State as a whole. This can be associated with particular events or seasons in the year which we have talked about repeatedly in conferences of Development Commissioners.

IX

September 19, 1957.



The long Parliament session is over. I am taking a deep breath on the eve of getting to the "Road" again. I propose moving virtually without respite till the next session begins. I must greet as many of you as I can, in your struggle on the ground. This one-way traffic in correspondence is poor victual for me.

This session of Parliament has opened a new chapter in our programme. Our friends, the members of Parliament, are in earnest to contribute their share to this movement. They will call on you. You should avail of their services to the full. Our friend Tandon will have sent you the outline already. I have no doubt that once the members of Parliament get by your side members of the State Legislatures will not be lagging far behind.

Meantime, as you will have seen from the draft report, issued by the Committee on Plan Projects headed by Shri Balwant Rai Mehta, there is already a proposal for the formation of a statutory Block Panchayat Board and a District Advisory Council to usher in the democratisation of government administration which we have long been looking for and which in fact was the missing link that perhaps has caused us most of the headache on this programme. There is also on the wider horizon a parallel development of revolutionary character promising to join us. I am talking of the Gramdan movement ushered in by Acharya Vinoba.

These developments, taking place simultaneously, have a special significance. I believe, I mentioned to you some time ago, that fundamentals are one in the core. If you touch them at one point you cannot but touch on all others. That all these vital developments are tending to meet at a common point will only go to confirm that we have been on the right track and been moving as fellow-voyagers despite all our failings.

Now to look a little beyond our specific assignments, the second Five-Year Plan, as we know has been in trouble for some time. Our Finance Minister has gone out today in search of aid from the willing and unwilling. As an Indian I feel depressed at the thought that help should not be forthcoming from those who can offer it even without

asking. I feel humiliated that we should have provided occasion to our leaders to go around with the beggar's bowl on behalf of a nation now of 380 million heads and 760 million hands. Agriculture has been the main source of life in India. We would not have been in this sorry plight had we attended to this mainstay of the nation with care and skill. Our strength as a people symbolised in the multi-culture and multi-religion home we have in India look meaningless if we fail to feed ourselves with our own efforts. I have chosen, therefore, to devote this letter to the one and only subject on which our future depends.

I would like you to bear with me for a while and just consider what an irony we are perpetrating on ourselves as a people. You may forget for the time being the learned people we have in the research laboratories and our colleges and schools. Think only of the unlettered farmers who are slogging on the soil in obscurity. Our production whether in wheat, rice or in other cereals is just about the lowest in the world. Yet on the same soil, under the same sky, we have farmers who, based on their native genius and resources, have produced by now more than ten times the average yield in India. They would be a source of pride to any people anywhere in the world. Have we taken cognizance of them and their methods?

Let us forget all science which the learned deal in, on paper. Let us turn instead to home remedies. Improved seeds, local manure from village sullage, dry leaves, cattle dung and urine and the green leaves that we can grow and catch will make a feast for the soil. Add to this the fullest utilisation of every drop of water available and multi-cropping where only 1.1 crop is being grown now on perennially irrigated land. Add further the Japanese method of paddy cultivation, line-sowing for wheat and dry crops as are already in vogue in many parts of the country. And finally a small effort in inter-culture. You will see, we have increased our food production by more than 50 per cent in both wet and dry lands. Yet arm-chair experts sneer at our Mussoorie recommendation which called for a mere 50 per cent increase in production on irrigated land and 30 per cent on dry land by end of the second Five-Year Plan.

There is substantial provision for irrigation, both major and minor, in the Second Plan. There is also provision for short-term credit through Reserve Bank and other sources. Resources in the villages are plenty only to be tapped, if the cooperatives of farmers can be established in the real spirit of cooperation. You will readily see that the know-how is there in abundance in our village folks despite their dumb and mute exterior. The wherewithal is there also in abundance. If there is a problem in agriculture it is more in organisation than in knowledge or finance.

I am sure you will attend personally in at least one of the camps you are organising for the farm leaders from October onwards. Imagine what a revolution it can mean to our economy if we succeed in

getting five farm leaders from each village to develop an urge and pride to propagate amongst all their compatriots in the village the advanced methods and practices which distinguish them from the others. The Farm Leaders' Camps were designed to bring to the surface knowledge and energies that now lie bottled in a select few. They should be equally eager to share these with others if only we can provide institutional dignity to them. The Farm Leaders' Camps if these are to yield the dividends, and not to be a *mela* and a ritual, will have to be followed up by the organisation of new village institutions of farm leaders in close association with the panchayats. These new organisations will have to be protected in their infancy from exploitation by others above, for political or other ends which unhappily are such a tragic feature in our today's sterile existence.

The demand I am making is modesty itself. I am but asking for the five in the village to multiply themselves in the rest of the 95. In this our B.D.O., the S.E.O., the E.O.A. and the G.S. will have a vital role to play. In fact, for the first time in this programme we are offering them a mirror in which they can see their real image as members of a team of community workers. If they can constitute a community of themselves, the farm leaders will do so as a matter of course. If on the other hand, the virus of the official hierarchy persists in these forums, we shall have laid the foundation only for a wider spread of the virus. I come back logically to the one and only thesis on which hangs the community development movement in its essence. Is the agent handling this movement on behalf of government himself functioning as a member of the community in the government apparatus? If he is, everything will work out just as it should. If he is not, not all the jargons and the recitations from the high and mighty will carry us one single step farther.

We are on the eve of a new upsurge. Will it be in the direction of liberation? Is the agent a searcher for liberation, himself? I do trust and hope that you will succeed in posing this question to all our fellow-workers. If you do, we need have no fear. The answer will work itself out. I hope to contact you again, and soon.

X

October 23, 1957.

I have been struggling for nearly a month now to get a little respite from current pressing preoccupation, so that I could sit down and do some serious stock-taking with you. The continuing programme in the field and the pile-up at the headquarters have denied me the respite I ask for. I am going out again this evening, and would not be back till the Parliament begins on the 11th November except for two packed days in between. I cannot, therefore, take any more chances. This must go out.

We have had the first seminar of the year at Srinagar. This was followed immediately by the conference of ministers for agriculture and allied subjects. The recommendations of the seminar, therefore, found full play in the deliberations during the ministers' conference. These recommendations necessarily were integrated with the approved all-India policy, and our seminar accordingly grew from the regional to the national level. I had the opportunity of participating in the seminar as also the ministers' conference. I came back convinced of my earlier thesis, which I elaborated in my last letter, that the problems of agriculture were more a matter of organisation than of knowledge or finance.

Our technical officers from States are as good as we can discover in this country. India has to be developed by Indians. We cannot make wholesale importation of workers from abroad. I am also sure that by and large foreign technicians, except for some high level specialists, will be no better than the technicians we have in our midst. I found it heartening to see that our Directors of Agriculture, of Animal Husbandry and other technical officers were as keen as we are to play their role in national reconstruction. If they are not being able to make their mark it is because we have not succeeded in securing for them the administrative and financial powers which, for instance, we provided for the Development Commissioners and other officers along

the line. There is also the inadequacy of supervisory staff. Besides, there is an absence of recognition of technical excellence. Is it, therefore, any wonder that in these circumscribed conditions, our technical officers remain inextricably tied down to the preparation of reports, plans and programmes on paper which are being called for by all and sundry ?

We then come to the next important question—whether the emoluments we offer to a graduate in agriculture, animal husbandry and allied subjects are comparable to those enjoyed by his counterparts in other fields such as medicine, engineering and administration. How do we expect to draw in the best talents of the country for technical development unless we appreciate the merit of technical services in the development of our resources ?

I posed my points of view as strongly as I could at the conference of ministers. While we shall pursue this from the Centre, I am posting these prosaic details to you because I thought you should also do some fundamental thinking on this subject and be ready to do your part in working out early solutions to these basic problems if we are to concentrate on work on the soil as against on paper. I am asking our friend, Tandan, to post to you the minutes of the conference of ministers at Srinagar so that you may also pursue the decisions with the State government so as to help the hard-pressed Directors in clearing the hurdles off their road before we can expect them to plunge fully into this movement. You would also do well to distribute copies of these letters, copies of 'Kurukshetra' and other publications from this ministry to the heads of departments if they are to be a part and parcel of the programme. Some of them have complained in this behalf. Hence this suggestion.

THE FARMER I MET IN BIHAR

I returned from Bihar two days ago. I had a most amazing experience with a farmer in an NES Block which I must share with you. This farmer along with four others has been doing joint cultivation with a self-contained irrigation system. He has been doing research almost on every type of seed, fertiliser and implement, and in fact has brought out a number of improved implements which are a refreshing experience. Our friend, B. D. Pande, is trying to get the full story of this farmer and his work with illustrations, for publication in 'Kurukshetra'. This farmer kept on telling me for more than an hour what he had been attempting during the past two years, what great success he had achieved and how others were rushing in to follow the lessons. His enthusiasm was something which I could not help envying. Can't we discover such people in every village and offer them drops of human nourishment so that they can grow and let others grow alongside ? What else is extension ?

FIVE YEARS OF PILGRIMAGE

On the 2nd of this month we completed five years of pilgrimage with the first set of projects which we started as the pilot in the year 1952. My mind has been in a continued whirl and, therefore, I am not in a position to sum up comprehensively all our successes and failures. I would like to attempt a broad generalisation. It is good even as an exercise. The credit side may be listed as follows :

(1) The forgotten villager has come to the focus.

(2) He has shed his fear of the erstwhile coercive apparatus of government.

(3) He has shown that he can be progressive in outlook beyond our expectations if he can be convinced of the soundness of the proposition offered.

(4) He has given proof that he can combine with others in an effort to "live and let live" if he is not misguided by reactionaries and designing self-seekers.

(5) The government apparatus has also shown that it has a soul, and the soul can manifest itself if the climate is there.

(6) A new army of liberation is already in the making.

(7) The abortiveness of uncoordinated effort has been proven beyond doubt.

(8) There has been expansion in the facilities for training in all spheres.

On the debit side I would list only two factors from which all else follow :

(1) Our failure to create institutions at village and Block levels such as can take over the initiative from government.

(2) Our failure to offer dignity to technical excellence.

State Consultative Committees are in the process of formation. Panchayats are being set up in all States, and panchayat representatives included as members of Block Advisory Committees. Parliament members have already started taking their due place in the programme. They will be there fully before long. The same will apply also to members of the State Legislature. As for technical officers, I should charge you with the responsibility of treating them as part and parcel of this movement and remove the hurdles on their way accordingly. You must demand of me all help such as I can render.

After five years of effort we have forged the full semblance and the part substance of an "army of liberation". This is a magnificent contrast to the "army of occupation" with which we have been all too familiar. That our Press and the public have been unduly harsh on us from time to time, and have expected virtual miracles overnight are but an indication of our impatience as a nation and the expectation of what this new apparatus can wield. I take all this as a compliment. I wish and pray that you will continue living on the nourishment that you can draw from your co-workers arrayed in this movement, as I live literally on the nourishment you have offered me throughout.

P.S. 14th of November is approaching fast. It is an International Children's Day this year. I hope our participation will be worthy of the claims we make. I seek your co-operation.

XI

November 25, 1957.

Let me tell you before I begin, Children's Day 1957 has been a significant event. Every State has done its bit. The out-turn has been about double, if not more, of even the best year since we began this feature in 1952. What is still more striking is the diversity of gifts that has characterised this year's collections for the "citizens of tomorrow". I offer you and, through you, to all our co-workers my hearty congratulations. The Prime Minister has deeply appreciated the fond sentiments.

TOUR ACROSS

Now to proceed—I have had a glimpse of our work on the ground. I have established contact with a cross-section of our co-workers in eight major States during the interval between the two sessions of Parliament. From what I have seen I am happy to tell you that, by and large, the child is in sound health. Its growth is as it should be within our known limitations. As I look back on my experiences at this distance and interval of time, there are two points that strike me rather forcefully. States are yet to develop a *regular system* of supervision and guidance by our top workers, administrative as well as technical, for their counterparts down below. Secondly, we are running a serious risk in our compromises on the number and quality of personnel in the Blocks. It is a blunder of a very serious type. Both these matters are within easy reach of good administration. No undue difficulty need arise in evolving a system of supervision. There is abundant experience in the government apparatus to do this to a perfection. As regards the second point, namely staffing, I am convinced that we should open no new Blocks until all existing Blocks have been fully and adequately staffed. I am prepared, if needs be, to co-operate with you by missing one six-monthly allotment. To me this appears to be of supreme importance if quality is not to be sacrificed.

CRISIS OF FAITH

Despite my normal buoyancy and optimism, I am finding it difficult to resist from within a sense of distress and depression over the economic crisis which we as a nation are going through today. The crisis as I see it, is one of our own creation. We have had enough of experiences by now of the world to understand that while we may receive relief in the form of palliatives from other lands, the major remedy has to be worked out by ourselves, unless we are prepared to barter our hard-won independence as some others have done perhaps unwittingly. I have no cause for grievance against others. Suppose you have a surplus of food and I arrive at your house hungry; you refuse to offer me a plate. I may consider you to be ungenerous but certainly I cannot hold you guilty.

The fact that others are not prepared to share our burden seriously, does not cause me undue anxiety so long as I do not lack the faith that I will stand with my chin up, no matter what happens. Most of you who are swimmers would have had the experience some time or the other of having been in deep waters. You would remember how you got out of it. It is the primal urge of life and the faith in survival that inevitably comes to one's rescue in all such situations. We are in a similar plight. I would now put to you a simple proposition. Out of 380 million people that inhabit this sub-continent today, at least 200 million can be considered fit to work. If they were to put in an extra effort equivalent to 10 days in a year for the community, they can produce by the simple calculation of arithmetic, community values worth Rs. 3,000 million. How many of us in this country today are working so to capacity, that they cannot put in this three per cent extra effort ?

Our Prime Minister and all others associated with him have been repeatedly emphasising the fact that agriculture constitutes the most vital and the main industry of India. Therefore, if India is to move forward economically and socially, it is agriculture that will have to produce in the short run, the extra dividend needed for investment. We know there is not one village in India out of the 550,000 in which the gap between the highest and the lowest output per acre, other conditions being the same, is less than 100 per cent. As a nation we are the lowest producer of foodgrains per acre of land. If not anything else, the simple act of weeding and raking the soil while the crops are standing, can make an increase in production of 8 to 10 per cent. You know, this is a mathematical certainty. There are other measures that can multiply this quantum manifold which we have discussed in earlier letters. These demand hardly any new knowledge which is not there already in everyone of our 550,000 villages.

ASOKA MEHTA COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Yet a High Power Committee led by Shri Asoka Mehta declares in its report that we are going to produce only 60 per cent of what the

States, the Planning Commission, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture agreed through individual discussions repeated round the table in Delhi. The Committee adds however, that if there is an earnest effort, they would not be surprised if the target of 15 million tons is really achieved. I find it amazing in the sense that after its three months of labour it has come to conclude that we as a people are going to be 40 per cent lazy, even when it is evident that our very independence is at stake on this vital matter of food production. Now, apart from other considerations, even a child can understand that we cannot continue depending on others howsoever generous to feed us, and yet expect that one that feeds us so, will not demand a basic price of us sooner or later. Have we sunk so low and naive as a people, that we should be ready to barter our freedom so cheaply? I must confess, I feel bewildered at this extraordinary situation.

WHAT I SAW AT NIZAMSAGAR

Let me now tell you despite the profundity of experts and intellectuals, as to what I saw during my travel across the States for the past two months. You would have heard about the Nizamsagar Project. It is in Andhra State now, about 100 miles from Hyderabad. It irrigates several lakhs of acres. We have now a post-intensive Project there which belongs to the category of 1952. I visited this area this time after an interval of three years. Three years ago when I arrived there, the first demonstration plot in Japanese paddy cultivation was being laid to the protestations of all the farmers around. I did my part then in the social educational campaign over this matter. When I visited this area recently, I drove over about 100 miles. I did not see a single plot which has not been covered by Japanese method of paddy cultivation on both sides of the road as far as my eyes could travel.

Nearly 84,000 acres have been brought under the Japanese method of paddy cultivation as a result of three years of effort in this project. The production has gone up pronouncedly—by 80 to 150 per cent. The area is worth a visit by any one especially by those who insist on remaining a cynic. The farmers are happy. Unfortunately, many of them today are drinking toddy from barrels as against solitary bottles in the past. This of course is another side of the picture, and shows what can really happen if there is any substantial increase in agricultural production without a corresponding improvement in the consciousness of the people, without a corresponding community outlet for the increased earnings.

Once again I came back convinced of what can be done if there is earnestness of purpose, if the effort can be planned from the top down to the ground. I was also convinced of the imperative necessity of building up the community in the form of institutions such as panchayats and co-operatives which must take root in every village of a significant size, which Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, has been dinning in our ears for years now. I saw also clearly how

profound our multi-purpose approach is, and how inextricably inter-related requirements of life are, if life is to be promoted on patterns of health and democracy.

FARM LEADERS' TRAINING PROGRAMME

While on tour I have run across a number of farm leaders' camps. I have participated in them and as always, been able to elicit from village people their reactions to the programme from the core of their heart. I have also received reports from our own workers as well as others, Indians and foreigners, in large numbers who have had the opportunity of seeing these camps in action. These camps have been started in all States with solitary exceptions. They have been confined to the sector of agriculture strictly in consonance with our decision. I am grateful to you for the pains you have taken to translate this mass operation programme from paper to the ground. I assure you, it will pay dividends higher than even you are ready to imagine now. What I would like to emphasise here, however, is that the holding of the camps is only a minor part of the undertaking. The essence of the programme will rest on how we follow up these camps. The follow-up has to be in two directions.

The farm leaders who go back to the villages have to form nuclei for a farmers' club or a farmers' union in the villages concerned. The club, in close association with the village panchayat, the village co-operative, will have to draw up a programme for increased food production for every family in the village. The club can grow only to the extent that the government agency gives to it the recognition as the only venue through which agricultural assistance is to flow to the village people. If in our over-anxiety, we bypass this association and try to deal with farmers in villages individually, as we have done in the past, we shall be undoing everything we are attempting in these camps. Nay, we shall have ended only in creating a sense of frustration all round.

On the government sector we may take note, that the more active these farmers are on their return from camps to plan for every family in the village, the more exacting will be their demand on the government agency for organisational support, apart from support in the form of seeds, manures, fertilizers, implements, credit and technical assistance. Therefore, we come back again to the main-spring of our activity. We discover that the utilisation of these farm leaders' camps will be determined strictly by the extent to which we are prepared to develop our technical resources in the Department of Agriculture, to the extent we are prepared to suppress our own ego at the ground level and let the stature of the farm leaders instead to grow.

Our friend, Mukerji in the ministry, is in charge of all training programmes. He has thought of a very sound idea of producing a monthly bulletin on these camps based on our observations and experiences which can be pooled between all States, so that the programme grows as an all-India movement. Sambamurthi, with whom

you would be familiar by now, is in technical charge of the programme in the ministry. He is racing from State to State to gather experiences first hand, and provide a living medium in himself for the transmission of one State's knowledge to the others. I do hope and trust that you will make use of him, also you will let us have simultaneously the experiences you have, which can be shared with all others.

INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The Consultative Committee of Parliament for this ministry, as you know, did a good job during the last session. We are beginning to meet them again from this week onwards. We would pose our problems to them. We would continue our efforts to enlist their active participation in the programme on the ground, to the extent they find it possible, subject to their limitations of time. The Informal Consultative Committee is in the process of formation in almost all States now. Some States where these have been formed have already held one or two meetings. The results have exceeded their own expectations. We come back to realise once again, that as a people we suffer not from lack of capacity to work or to combine with others, not either from lack of intelligence and knowledge, but from a lack of faith in ourselves. There are more people than we know of, who are eager to share our burden, given a concrete, honest and earnest chance. The Consultative Committees are providing further confirmation of this thesis. If this Committee has not been formed in your State may I appeal to you to try to bring this about soon ?

BALWANTRAI MEHTA COMMITTEE REPORT

The Balwantrai Mehta Committee report has now been finalised in the light of the discussions they have had with the State governments based on the earlier report which was in draft form. This report, I understand, is going to be submitted formally to government this week. The most significant point the report makes out, is democratic decentralisation and its logical corollary namely the futility of *ad hoc* bodies nominated, which never can strike roots on the soil.

Some States have already gone ahead, pending the finalisation of the report, to give effect to the pattern of village panchayats and Block Boards envisaged by the Committee. The Committee in their final report proposes to make a fairly flexible approach to the question recommending that in some States the statutory executive body may not necessarily be at the Block level but may also be at a higher level. But what they put forward as a crucial proposition is that the entire Block staff and Block resources have to be strictly subject to the approval of a statutory non-official organisation, the Block Development Officer functioning as its chief executive in the Block, charged solely with development and free from all regulatory functions. This is a significant step forward in the direction of the democracy we have been out to build at the grass roots. I am glad that the large number of our B.D.Os. who have functioned in a popular way will find a new organisation to share their agonies on a democratic pattern, and that those

B.D.Os. who have functioned as the potential feudal princes will also find their false ambitions nipped in the bud.

GRAMDAN MOVEMENT

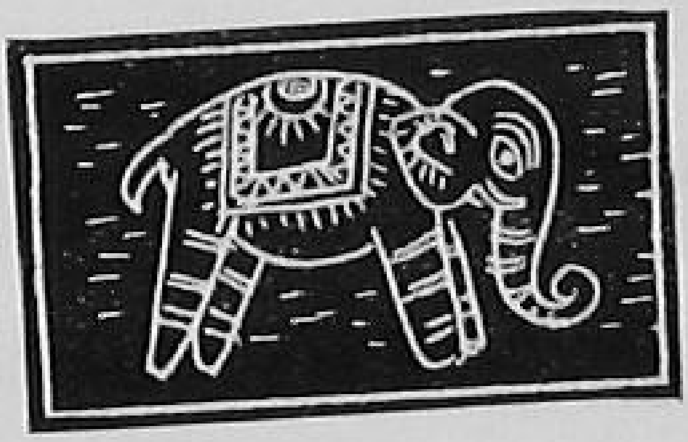
We have already had preliminary discussions with leaders of the Gramdan movement as to the pattern on which effect is to be given to the Yelwal statement of our leaders which visualised the closest of co-operation between the Community Development movement and the Gramdan movement. We propose to meet again during the middle of December to finalise the pattern. It will then be placed before the government for final approval. The fact that an organisation like the Sarva Seva Sangh, which is unquestioned for its idealistic approach to life, the honesty and integrity of its top leaders, finds it worthwhile to explore the possibility of a reconciliation of its objective with that of the Community Development programme by mutual adjustment, is testimony enough that we have been working on fundamentals, that our approach and our effort have been sound and honest, even though the results may leave a lot yet to be desired. An alliance between these two organisations, if it can be forged on a common pattern, will mean development of a far-reaching character. Once again may I offer you my congratulations ?

THE GREAT SECRET

After having said all these, I come back again to the basic question. How do we get over the crisis of faith that has brought us to our present turmoil, and which threatens our very independence ? Do consider this for a moment. Even to a farmer it is evident that without putting in more than what he receives he cannot create an orchard for his off-springs who are his main concern. For generations, our forefathers have lived on ancestral capital till the "Bank of India" refused further overdrawal. How do we build up a bank balance except by consuming less than what we earn or, to put it the other way about, by earning more than what we spend ? Commonsense appears in today's world to be the most uncommon commodity. The vast majority seem to believe that they can continue in their idle abundance and others would invest for them. As the story goes of the king's pond which was to be filled with milk by his subjects and which got filled with plain water because each one thought, the others would bring the milk and he could pick the pocket of the king, we as a people seem to be going through a similar orgy of self-deception.

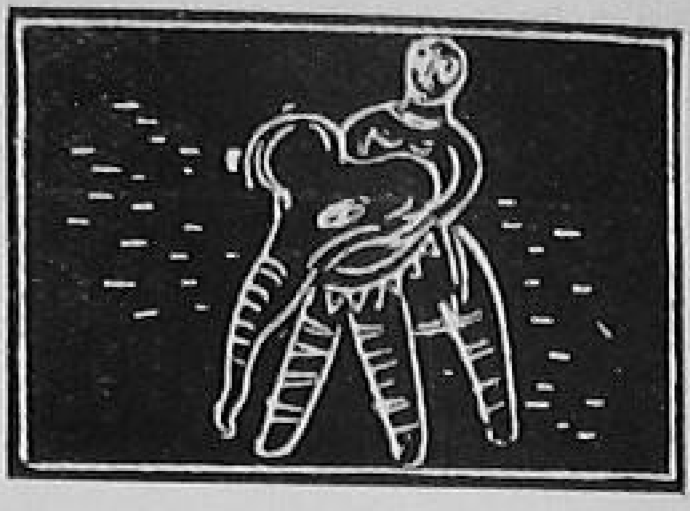
From all that is happening in countries adjoining us, we can readily see that the difference between India and other lands, is just one of difference in leadership, in spite of all our complaints. May I hazard here a prophesy ? Everything else may repeat, but one thing shall not. The present leadership shall not repeat for many a decade to come. Therefore, we build ourselves today, or else we sink once again to the dark abyss from which we had, it would then appear, a mere chance boost up.

If *faith* in onself, one's country and the world, nay in life as such, has to be revived I must share a top secret with you—"To give more than one receives" is the only answer to the riddle. There is no other. Whatever little success we claim for the programme till now, has been due to the singular fact that a fair number of people have practised this key principle perhaps without knowing it. How do we extend this to all our co-workers and to the hundreds, thousands and the millions who are our charge? This is the real problem of extension that we face today. To this, we must needs provide the answer afresh.



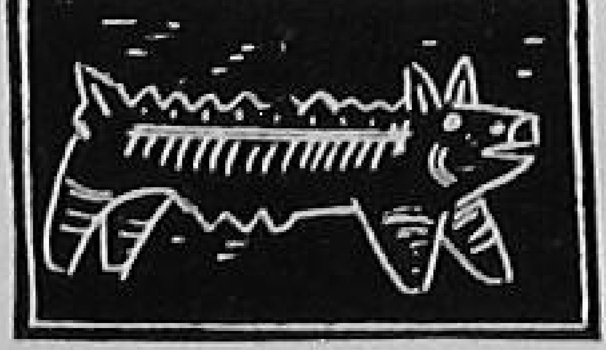
XII

December 14, 1957.



I propose to make this my last monthly letter to you unless you wish it otherwise. Somehow I have a feeling, I may be mistaken, that these communications are proving to be a one-way traffic. I am totally opposed to the idea of working under illusions, of imposing myself on anyone and even more, in indulging in what may appear to be a mere exercise in essay-writing.

My protest arises from an inner conflict which I cannot resolve because of the fact that none of you has cared to drop me a line on the post-intensive Blocks in your State on which I sought your personal views in my letter* No. 8/57 dated 20th August, 1957. As co-workers on a common programme, I thought I had a claim to a share of the knowledge such as you possess and, that even if you did not have that knowledge you would acquire it in the interest of the common programme and make me a party to it so that I could render you such assistance as I owed to you.



*Cf. page 38.

XIII

January 25, 1958.

I have been missing you. I have felt forlorn and depressed as rarely before. The fault is entirely mine, for as I look back I find that at no time has any of my co-workers at any point failed to respond when I made myself clear as to what I expected of him or her. Therefore, if there is any complaint, the onus should have rested on me. I have heard from almost all of you during the intervening period. You have demanded the continuance of this monthly communion. So I get back to the point from which I offered tentatively to depart with a heavy heart.

It is not easy to get back, for time has been flying past. We have been functioning more like a clock minus the winding. I realise, another year has been left behind. The new year is on with newer perspective and fresh problems to grapple. Republic Day celebrations are in the making all around. As I look out of the window of my office at the thoroughfare known as Rajpath leading from the Rashtrapati Bhavan to the India Gate I discern a spirit of jubilation and also of accomplishment charged in the air. All this of course is as it should be. I cannot however resist a comparison against this of the clusters of mud hovels I saw a few days back. Millions of these flash across my mind in an endless procession. I see men, women and children in their expectant looks ready to lift the Himalayas, yet struggling for the

next meal with anxiety writ in the face. The gap between Delhi with its sprawling mansions and the far away countryside on which it is supported, is something that staggers my imagination. I am frightened over the enormity of the task that lies yet ahead. I can also visualise the unremitting criticism to which you and I are going to be subject for years to come, because the 200 crores offered for the Second Plan on this programme would not work the miracle of bridging that yawning gap.

We held our last seminar at Aurangabad. I had written on the Ellora and the Ajanta Caves in an earlier letter when we held a similar seminar years back. I saw the caves in their grandeur in a new light this time. We did have a Welfare State in some remote age when mighty kings did dream in a big way and commandeered the mightiest talents then living. Grand temples and assembly halls came out of the effort. The temple Kailash, the epitome of the dream, stands there as a matchless specimen of architecture and sculpture. But today it is a mere museum piece. It was not invested with the soul. Therefore, God never took his seat there. It could not grow to be a place of pilgrimage.

Yet, when we look at Triveni at Allahabad where three mighty rivers meet, we find that for thousands of years it has never failed to be the site for the Kumbh Mela which continues to attract millions from every nook and corner of this sub-continent. Man added nothing to its sanctity; if at all he added slums and hovels. The same holds good for Hardwar, Rishikesh, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Bodh Gaya and the thousand other places of nature's sanctity of which we are proud in India. "Why did Kailash at Ellora fail to acquire sanctity?", I queried of myself. I came back invariably to the only answer that I could discover—Kailash was built by a benevolent ruler; it was meant to do good and proclaim the glory of the king that ruled; people were not a party to it except as admirers and sightseers. Let us cross now the fifteen hundred and odd years that separate the present from this past

STUDY TEAM REPORT

The Study Team Report provides a welcome coincidence in our thinking and confirms what we have been talking about. With the best will in the world and all the sweat that we shed, we shall be building only museum pieces for the future, albeit infinitesimally short-lived, unless we aim at building up the people. Man however cannot grow as a social being except through institutions. The lone wolf has refuge only in the Himalayas or the woods like the Dandakaranya. The Study Team has confirmed the answer we have been musing about. This, as you know, has been discussed in the ministry, in the Central Committee and then in the recent meeting of the N.D.C. The minutes of the N.D.C. will reach you shortly. In a matter of this import, you understand, why the Centre cannot be categorical in its insistence on any particular form. The essence has been accepted

without a dissenting voice. The form has been left to the States to work out based on local conditions and enriched by each others experiences. The Ministry of Community Development will of course play its role in pooling the knowledge of the progress from month to month and making these available to you at periodic intervals. But what comes of it will depend in the end, on how earnestly you move ahead pushing this through, despite all inevitable hurdles. We are aching to give you help; but help will not be thrust.

We have now worked out a staggered programme based broadly on the Study Team recommendations. The elimination of the distinction between N.E.S. and the C.D. stage is a long overdue consummation. This, I know, you will welcome. The increased provision in the second stage will be equally so. That the programme had to be staggered was inevitable in view of the increasing shortage of key staff, the deterioration in the quality of fresh entrants to the programme and the unbearable burden of supervision which was threatening to throw the programme off gear.

Yet we know a certain expectation has been aroused in the country with our plan for full coverage by end of the Second Plan. Any undue deferment in the spread of the programme was bound to lead to frustration in areas uncovered. I believe, we have found a formula of pre-extension confined to the limited field of agriculture which offers at least a compromise. This should help in more ways than I can explain in this letter. When you get the ministry's proposal, you should give it as searching an analysis as you can. You will find that we have performed a virtual rope trick within our budget provision without affecting yours either.

Our friend, Mukerji, with his team of associates has now finalised the pattern of a revised programme covering all aspects of training initial as well as inservice. We are plunging headlong in the implementation of this programme and we will send you shortly a note covering the whole picture. If man is basic to our programme, his training even more so as the means for what we aim to achieve. The Centre will endeavour to provide the dynamics to the institutions which it runs directly, with such periodic assistance as we need from you. But the institutions run in the States will depend entirely on the vitality you can provide. I seek of you a very high priority on this.

GRAMDAN AND THE NEW HORIZON

You will have seen in the Press and will have received also by now the proceedings of our discussions with leaders from Sarva Seva Sangh. You will have noted the new definition of the objectives as emerged from a joint effort between the two organisations. I offer you my hearty congratulations over this consummation. That an organisation such as the Sarva Seva Sangh and a purely governmental agency such as ours can find no point of difference in the common objectives is something the import of which history alone can unfold. I have already written to Chief Ministers of States on the subject. We shall

soon begin to send out literature on Gramdan to be distributed to all our institutions including village libraries.

Now that all political organisations are also wedded to Gramdan as the objective in the Socialistic State we aim to work for, there should be no great hurdles in the implementation of the agreed programme. You will do well to establish contact with Gramdan workers in the State and make them come in closer touch with our workers so as to strengthen the joint and promote the common effort. In the Welfare State which is taking slow and steady shape, the distinction which has marred an understanding heretofore between the people, their representatives and the people's servants should disappear altogether. Effective people's panchayats and co-operatives at village and higher levels, activities of reconstruction of Gramdan villages on agreed patterns and promotion of Gramdan and the socialistic society of which it is an integral phase, will go a long way to help obliterate this artificial distinction.

AGRICULTURE THE BASE FOR OUR FREEDOM

We now come to the crucial question of the hour—food production. The National Development Council has given a clarion call. All political parties in the country are equally united over this issue. It has been agreed beyond the shadow of a doubt that we are at near about the lowest level in our production in agriculture and that there is room for enormous increase with only a concerted drive based predominantly on local effort and resources. The N.D.C. meeting highlighted the most amazing revelation that we have more than four million acres of land under potential coverage of irrigation. Our marginal food deficit, which has been our undoing today, could be wiped off in a year if only we utilised the water which we harnessed at an enormous cost to the nation and now going waste for want of effort on our side to promote field distributaries and other allied matters.

This together with the sudden realisation that we have hardly spent 40 per cent of the provision we have under Minor Irrigation in Community Development Programme for the country as a whole has come, I must confess, as a rude shock to me. I would like you to implement the proposal for the establishment of a Minor Irrigation Wing in the Irrigation Department of the State to take exclusive care of Minor Irrigation in NES and Community Development areas which you agreed to at the Mussoorie Conference. The expenditure on this should largely be recoverable as works-charged establishment under the government sponsored programme in the Blocks. Likewise it should be possible to promote mass effort to provide field channels for irrigation schemes which have now been complete and are ready to go into operation.

Field bunding for conservation of moisture can certainly be taken up as a mass operation programme, the way we took up building of village roads. In fact, our friends in Bombay under the dynamic

guidance of the present Director of Agriculture, has already taken this up in several areas as a virtual military operation. In fact the pressure from the Director of Agriculture in Bombay is already so heavy on the Development Commissioner that it is something which can be a matter of envy. Why can't we get the Directors of Agriculture in all States to push us the way it is being done in Bombay?

We have reasons to feel grateful to the United States Government and many others in the world for the aid in cash and materials and even in foodgrains that they have been offering. But it is not much of a pride for a predominantly agricultural country such as ours to continue crying for two meals a day which others should exert their muscles to provide. A foolish and lazy borrower is a liability not merely to himself but to the creditor as well. We have no right to call ourselves a free people if we have to continue our economic dependence and what is infinitely worse dependence on food which constitutes the very base of life. We have repeatedly stressed that our Gram Sevak should devote about 70 to 80 per cent of his time to agriculture and associated activities. This has to be enforced with a firm determination.

The Farm Leaders Camp we initiated on October 2, 1957 has exceeded even my own expectations. I have come across these camps in practically all parts of the country. These camps will end in sheer frustration unless these are followed up even more rigorously. We must create farmers' unions in every Gram Sevak circle where the camps have been held. The farm leaders so trained must be serviced through supplies, credit and technical assistance, all synchronised with the patterns of cropping. Agricultural targets have to be split up to the village level and it will not do merely to work the target down from the top. The farm leaders trained in the camp and if possible all agriculturists in the village will have to be *involved* in the agreed targets.

All this will no doubt throw up an enormous burden on the present relatively weak agricultural organisation of government. It is the pressure from the ground that will make the weakness in an organisation still more manifest. The building up of the departmental organisation must keep pace with the pressure from the people. In this the Development Commissioner and his organisation alone can serve the role of the catalyst. We have to nurse these organisations and do all we can to impart vitality and sustenance to them such as we can gather from the grass roots. A mere reiteration of the weakness of the agricultural and allied organisations will but serve to damn our own selves and very rightly so.

The representatives of the Planning Commission, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture and our own Ministry will soon begin a concerted programme of visits to States to identify the problems on the ground such as have defeated our effort so far, and to offer to States such assistance as constitutes the State's claim on the Centre.

COLOURFUL RAJASTHAN

I was in Rajasthan last week. Despite the fact that Rajasthan was formed out of a number of feudal States with their individual loyalties, despite the enormous gaps in their technical organisations, the State has made remarkable progress during the past two years. I do not mean of course that every Block there is a model. But taken as a whole, the State is worth a visit by any of our workers from any part of India. My appetite was not whetted by a three day contact with the countryside. So I go there again on a full week's race across the State beginning 27th evening. It is a joy indeed to see the barren countryside taking on a new bloom and the rugged people in their thousands gathering together on mass operation forward. Despite the woeful shortage of technical staff I mentioned earlier, Rajasthan is the only State which has by far exceeded the all-India accomplishment in the provisions for Minor Irrigation. I know there is not a single State in India today where work of this nature, which can delight the eyes as also the mind, has not been done. If I have mentioned Rajasthan in particular it is because I do not know a single State in India which has the disability with which Rajasthan started and which has to work with nature less hospitable.

EXHIBITION OR UTILISATION ?

Throughout the country we have built up an enormous number of institutions, schools, panchayat ghars, recreation clubs, information and community centres, village latrines, bathrooms attached to wells, adult education centres, panchayats, youth clubs, mahila mandals and what not. Are we sure these institutions are being exploited to the full ? Enrolment in schools especially of girls is a woeful sight. Panchayat ghars and co-operative godowns by and large are rarely open except for ceremonial occasions and visits of V.I.Ps. I recognise that institutions and buildings are good to see and offer visible emblems of our effort. I should have thought however that all the pounding that we have received in the State Legislatures, Parliament, the Press and the successive reports of the Evaluation Organisation, would have given us by now a new dimension for our effort and switched us universally to the fullest utilisation of institutions that have existed or have been created instead of the present dispersion of a major part of our energies in creating buildings and institutions minus the involvement of the people and minus their utilisation. Development Commissioners I know in many ways are as helpless in these matters as we are in the Centre. But assuredly we have a right to expect greater drive from our friends the Collectors and the S.D.Os. to ensure that a sense of realism does trickle down to our workers on the ground —the B.D.Os., the Gram Sevaks and all others. How do we wean ourselves away from the suicidal mania of exhibitionism ? How can we be the people mellowed by the long history we have behind ? Frankly, this is one of the subjects I am including for the forthcoming May Conference on Community Development.

THE TEST

The long Budget Session of Parliament will commence on the 10th of February. I am unhappy as also frightened at the prospect of having to be tied down in my movements. I would endeavour all the same to get out as frequently as I can to be with you against the dust and the weather on the ground. When the Community Development Ministry's budget discussion comes up again this year, what do I tell the House this time is the question that is exercising my mind. Temperamentally I am unqualified to talk any longer in dreams or in finding excuses, for I know even the Himalayas are no barrier when there is determination. The sputniks, the expeditions in the South Pole are vivid examples. What do I tell the world about the correctives that we have *actually* applied since we promised action nearly a year ago ? You are part and parcel of my mind and muscles. You must provide me inspiration.

We are going to be judged today, tomorrow as well as the day-after, by what we achieve in the direction of self-sufficiency in agriculture, self-reliance and autonomy in the institutions of our people, and by the scientific knowledge coupled with a determination for its extension that we instil into our technical departments. You and I are supposed to be the catalysts in this consummation. "Where do we stand ?" is the question.

XIV

March 31, 1958.

Discipline once broken takes time to be rehabilitated. I see that I have already missed a month with you. Yet it is not because I have been unaware of time passing by. In fact I have throughout been arguing and debating with you on some crucial problems which have grown to be a torment to me.

DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONERS AND 365 MILLION PROBLEMS

Despite the long Parliament session which has been on and the rising volume of work in the ministry, I have been touring States as frequently and continuously as I could. For the past few days I have been at the headquarters applying my mind to an analysis of what has been achieved during the past year and on what we should concentrate for the new financial year that begins from tomorrow. I should like to portray all these faithfully before the House when our budget demand comes up for discussion beginning day after tomorrow. I have been looking for inspiration on this from you all as I mentioned in my last letter. I find that you are as heavily burdened and wearied as I am. This must ease, for no one can carry more than what the human frame can bear. We have 365 million problems in this country. These are much more than what our shoulders alone can bear.

IN RETROSPECT

I find that we have done an excellent piece of work in establishing the pattern of the National Extension Service. We have also broken the first crust of the people's resistance to their own effort and to the approach of government. We have also succeeded to some extent in bringing about a new emphasis on production *vis-a-vis* amenities.

Against this success we should consider our basic errors of approach if any, as also our failures. We recognise immediately that the technical departments have yet to share the initiative on this programme. In other words, the National Development Council's decision that the Block should be treated as the administrative unit for planning and development still remains a "Decision" only. Are we sure that the situation does not apply equally to institutions of people who were to

be our allies? Is it any wonder that Development Commissioners, Collectors and B.D.Os. should be groaning under this mounting burden?

THE COLLECTIVE APPROACH

Now, to help bring about a collective approach, we have recently adopted in the ministry a new pattern of contact with States. Ministry's officers whether technical or administrative will no longer be visiting States individually as they have done so far. Instead, all our technical officers as a team headed by the Secretary of the Ministry are visiting States one after the other. On arrival in a State they will break themselves into groups for allied subjects. They will visit projects according to a pre-arranged plan. Finally, they meet at the headquarters round the table and decide on agreed measures and correctives. Two States have been covered so already; two more will be done in the month of April. Experiences thus far indicate that this is a timely move pregnant with high potentialities.

What with the Five-Year Plan and the day-to-day problems of coordination, your hands are already too full. Yet if you lose touch with the soil your work perforce will be devoid of that vitality on which alone the programme can depend for its nourishment. I would strongly recommend that you introduce the same approach at the State level. It means that along with the Heads of Departments in the State you will make similar visits at least once a year to every Division. The process will be the same, namely visits to the field to be followed by detailed discussions with the Divisional Officers round the table. The Divisional Officer may do the same in his turn as regards the Districts, the District Officer as regards the Block and the Block Officer in regard to Gram Sevak circles. This can be a planned programme of field visits by our staff as an essential minimum. It should not, however, preclude individual visits by officers for study of special problems or on special occasions. Apart from guaranteeing a minimum coverage of supervision the new step will certainly contribute towards coordination between different agencies of development with which we have been grappling.

FOOD THE BASIC INDUSTRY

The farm leaders' training programme is forging ahead in all States and is generating an enormous volume of interest and enthusiasm in our farmers, individually and collectively. We have throughout been alive to the fact that our yield in agriculture is near about the lowest in the world. Every one agrees that even a hundred per cent increase on this subsistence pattern of agriculture is not so much a problem of high science. Seeds, composts and green manures, chemical fertilizer to the extent available, line sowing, inter-culture, irrigation, field bunding and plant protection measures are by no means technical problems. These are merely matters for organisation. We have all the funds we need and much more of the know-how. We are

committed on the concentration of our workers' time if needs be, even at the expense of other specialties.

What is holding up the programme then? And why is it that we cannot make the fullest use of the irrigation potential created in the NES and CD areas whether through major schemes, tubewells or other programmes of government? Why can't we provide the field channels through popular effort based on grants-in-aid and loan for which money is going abegging. Pray, how can we call ours a Community Development Programme, if we fail on this life and death question? India's output in commodities and goods is roughly of the order of Rs. 6,500 crores a year of which Rs. 5,000 crores account for the yield in agriculture. A minor shift in this would make all the difference between a dashing and crawling economy. Even a child should understand this. Why is it that our project workers are failing to respond? What can we do to help you reorient the outlook of our workers on the ground?

We are receiving substantial aid from many countries. We are thankful to all of them, to the U.S. Government in particular. If we can be determined not to fail ourselves, the world assuredly cannot afford to fail us. Basically it is agriculture alone which will make or unmake India. Forgive me for this repeated pressure I am putting on you. You may readily see that it is only a rebound of the pressure to which I am being subject. I am anxious to do my part. In fact, I can have no peace of mind till we have crossed this barrier of our dependence on imported food. Determination is all that the hour calls for.

DEMOCRACY AND WELFARE STATE

Coming now to the major error in our approach, it has been our hope that Democracy will follow as a corollary once Welfare has been established. There is no parallel in the world today, or a precedent yesterday to provide us substance for this assumption. Look at the glaring instance of the two Indian States where welfare activities characterised the main feature of administration under benevolent feudal rule. What are the lessons they offer? Democracy means self-reliance in the people woven as a community. Welfare follows as a logical sequence. Democracy does not follow welfare inevitably. It has never happened anywhere. Believe me, this has come to me as a revelation. Have you come across a bird or an animal opting for freedom once used to spoon feeding?

Now that this ministry is taking up the subject of panchayats, recently transferred under a Presidential order, we propose to go all out to establish panchayats in every village as the first item in the agenda of our programme. We must ensure that all activities within the village become the responsibility of the panchayat for planning as also for implementation. We propose also to establish village co-operatives to cover every village, and village schools to serve as community centres for the children and the adults alike. This is a mandate from the Prime Minister. I am determined to see this through.

150 MILLIONS COVERED

The proposal for democratic decentralisation, recommended by the Balwantrai Mehta Study Team, is under examination by all States. We shall have the opportunity for stock taking when we meet at the forthcoming National Conference on Community Development. But regardless of the decision on intermediate levels, village panchayats, village co-operatives and the village schools are subjects on which there are no two opinions. These institutions must be created and nursed with all the earnestness we can command. In the process, our burden which has grown to be almost oppressive would be lightened and the programme enriched by the sum total of the vitality of all the people covered by it. 150 millions of our people have already been encompassed within the orbit of this programme. As I write this to you I confess, I hardly feel the impact in myself of the dynamism latent in these 150 millions. Let us be honest with ourselves; it will do us a world of good. We have so far run a development programme hoping that the community would grow in the process. It has been too sad an error. We have to mend it. Not much has yet been lost. Community must precede development. It cannot work the other way about. Have not we had 6 years of the other experience?

Our programme, as I indicated earlier, will be under fire in the Parliament in the next few days. Once again I propose to make a clean breast of our success as also our failings and reiterate my appeal for the sharing of the common burden by the members of Parliament without exception. I will continue my struggle to forge new alliances on all fronts. You alone can draw on them.

XV

May 10, 1958.

The Budget session of the Parliament comes to an end today. My mind is already full with the call of the road on which I long to be with you.

The debate on Community Development this year has been rather a tame one. Members of Parliament have been closely associated with us through the Informal Consultative Committee and also through their active interest in the programme on the ground. They have shown me more sympathy than perhaps I deserved. They have been equally generous to our co-workers in the field. It is heartening in one sense as it indicates that there is greater appreciation by them of the fact that the Community Development Programme is one of developing the community; that the community is something like the dog's tail which does not get easily straightened and even if straightened does not promise to remain so except through continuous effort to hold it on. Physical accomplishment is something that should follow as a corollary if the community has caught the right impulse.

The consensus in Parliament is prepared to bear with us in this process of attrition against our spiritual ills. This imposes on us the onus to see that the light is held up for the purpose for which the candle was lit. It demands that we keep away from unconscious effort in any corner at black magic which can lead but to make believe.

The Speaker of the Lok Sabha who is also the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Group inaugurated yesterday a Study Circle in the Parliament on Community Development. I hope to have before long about 100 members of Parliament participating in it. Community Development can flourish if the physical efforts we make on the ground, continue to be supported by a growing philosophy which alone will provide the nourishment. The Study Circle can help materially in promoting this philosophy through pooled thinking at the national level. Community Development cannot grow into an enduring national movement offering the synthesis that the country calls for, unless it grows to be a living philosophy for all the conscious citizens. How else can you start the chain action except through the Parliament, the highest forum of the nation ? After all, with powers vested

in the sovereign Parliament and the State Legislature, the programme in its physical and spiritual content can travel only to the extent of the understanding that the consensus in these institutions offers.

Parliament members are now going on recess for nearly three months. They are keen to play their part in the programme. I have made an appeal to all members to go out to the villages at their convenience, give a word of comfort to our workers who are slogging in obscurity and also to pull up those who show signs of stagnation. Members of Parliament can also participate in our Gram Sahayak Camps, in the training of our workers in institutions and in diverse other fields according to their individual inclinations. Our programme covers all facets of the life of our people and therefore offers scope to everyone interested in one specialty or the other to make a contribution to its promotion.

Parliament members have free travel facilities upto the nearest rail-head, but within the block they will naturally have to depend for transport on the Block jeep. This has to be provided to them in mutual arrangements. If we wish to avail of the services of the 750 members of Parliament who represent the country's hopes and aspirations and who determine the pace at which we should travel, it is of the utmost importance that all our workers in the field appreciate the significance of the association of these top representatives of our people. There has to be give and take on both sides. As I have indicated earlier there is ample goodwill already, much more perhaps than we have a right to claim. Our project workers including Collectors, must be prepared to go all out to enlist their participation. I hope you will issue necessary instructions to all concerned.

N.D.C. AND THE CRUCIAL DECISION

You will have read in the Press and also have heard from the ministry regarding the decision endorsed recently by the N.D.C. on the staggering of the programme and democratic decentralisation. The elimination of the distinction between the NES and CD Blocks is a major step forward. With this artificial distinction gone, we shall be spared a lot of confusion in the interpretation of the programme to ourselves and even more so to people from the outer world. It puts the NES as the pattern of service agency and Community Development a continuing process, these were to be. The enhanced budget provision for the post-intensive block, the re-adjustment of the budget pattern, the pre-extension phase of one year confined exclusively to agriculture and the consequential rephasing of programme coverage are distinct features to the advantage of the programme.

The discussion in the N.D.C. meeting revealed appreciable progress already made in thinking as also in action in the direction of democratisation and decentralisation recommended by the Balwantrai Mehta Study Team. In a country of the size of India and with the diversity in the stages of development between different areas it is not

logical to expect the same pattern of decentralisation and democratisation in all areas. Village panchayats, village co-operatives and the village schools have been accepted as the basic institutions throughout India and been incorporated as essential prerequisites for the implementation of the programme as conveyed in the formal letter issued by the ministry. But at higher levels, the institutions of people may be at the Block, Taluka or the District, according to the conditions obtaining in individual States.

What is crucial is not the level at which the intermediate body is established, but the substance of power that is agreed to be shared by the State Legislature with the local institutions. Independence has been won, but freedom cannot be secure until the powers of government are exercised by the people from the village upwards in progressive measures. The aim should necessarily be to ensure that the maximum of autonomy is enjoyed by the people's institutions on items of the programme which come within their orbit. The State of course cannot divest itself of residual powers and safeguards. What is material is that not merely in implementation, but, what is much more important, in making of decisions, the responsibility vests in non-official representatives of people who alone in independent India reflect the hopes and aspirations of the people as also their mandate.

THE PREPARATORY PHASE

There is a logic developing. States I know, will go ahead implementing the decision on decentralisation and democratisation. There will necessarily be a transition before this far-reaching measure can embrace all the areas. We wish to use this transition as a preparatory phase. Village panchayats can have sub-committees with co-opted members from amongst the common rung of the village people charged with different groups of subjects. These sub-committees can be linked up very closely with the Gram Sahayaks we are now training in village camps. Thus we can expand the sphere of functional democracy so as to embrace within its orbit a progressively wider number of people. Village factions, as I have always maintained, are but the manifestations of bottled energies running amuck in the absence of creative functional outlets. The sub-committees we visualise can transform the character of competition from individual to functional glorification. This can be a major step forward if we have proper understanding of the processes involved and can carry this through with determination.

The same process can aply to the Block Advisory Committees. The sub-committees of Block Advisory Committees can be manned equally by members from the B.A.C. and co-opted members from the people according to their aptitudes and inclinations. The process once begun will grow in volume like the snow ball. This will offer scope for responsibilities being properly pinned down on individuals who can be judged scrupulously on their performances in public. The phase should also prepare the ground for wider responsibilities being

conferred statutorily to these local institutions. While the comparison may not be quite apposite we may still recall for better understanding of the situation the processes that India had to go through in wresting powers from the erstwhile British rulers. Let us be clear. Powers cannot be given if these are to be secure. Powers have to be taken. The preparatory phase, of which I have given you the bare outline here, should serve to train the people in assuming powers collectively and wielding these in the way democracy commands. We shall discuss this at greater length at the Mt. Abu Conference. A paper on this will be issued by the ministry shortly as a reference.

TRAINING—THE KEY TO PERSONNEL

Many of you have taken pains to participate with us in the formulation of the syllabus and other matters connected with the revised programme of training. The training programme, as it has emerged, promises much more effective results than heretofore. We are straining every nerve to speed up action on the decisions we have now finalised. But the Training Centres run directly under the Ministry of Community Development can reach only up to a point. The major sector of training relating to the Gram Sevaks and the subject-matter specialists, both initial and inservice, are vested in the States. You will have received by now our final recommendations on this behalf. You will have to take urgent steps for the implementation of your part of the assignment. In this, an officer in the State exclusively in charge of all Training programmes attached to the Development Commissioner, is the first essential pre-requisite. This key functionary is not still in position in some States. Ministry of Community Development have undertaken to share the expenditure on this functionary. I would request your earnest attention to his early placement. One other matter in which I need your assistance is the utilisation of the full capacity of the Training Centres run under MCD. Despite repeated entreaties from our Training Division, I am unhappy to find that an appreciable part of our capacity is still going waste. Training is the key to the problem of personnel. The national emergency which has been thrust on us by the impact of the second Five-Year Plan, calls for avoidance of all wastage of our hard-put resources. I plead for your assistance.

FOOD—THE BASE OF ALL ENDEAVOURS

The concerted effort of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, our own and the Departments of Agriculture in States will appear to have brought about an appreciable emphasis on food production. The coming kharif crop should begin to reflect the impact. This emphasis on food production must be kept up cost what it may. Roads, schools, panchayat ghars and village lanes will follow as a logical corollary in our programme if food can be grown in surplus. It will not work the other way about. In fact we have already seen amenities created, which are disintegrating right before our eyes in the absence of a provision for maintenance from government and a surplus in the hands of

the people. Forgive me for this reiteration. We cannot repeat this emphasis too often.

PRIZES FOR VILLAGES AND VILLAGE WORKERS

The prizes offered by the ministry now to villages as well as village workers on an all-India contest can be linked up with the planned effort now afoot in all States, for the kharif crop. Properly guided, this contest can yield high dividends both in physical output as also in the spirit engendered. This can be a recurring feature every year if you can make this first year's trial a success. I must confess I had a feeling somewhat of a surprise at the lukewarm response to this, to start with. Things however have improved considerably by now. If you devote a little of your personal attention to this matter I am sure you will find it a very rich investment.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

This conference has imposed rather a heavy burden on our friends in Rajasthan. But rich and generous by temperament and traditions as they are, they are bearing the burden with a smile. No effort is being spared to provide for facilities such as the limited resources of Mt. Abu can offer.

This is the first National Conference on Community Development we announced last year. I do hope and trust that we will have the invitees from the various departments in the States to attend this conference so that the burden of this programme resting heavily on your shoulders may begin to be shared by others to whom now it must needs be transferred.

The conference this year should be devoted as we hope it will, to consolidation rather than expansion both in thought and action. You will have seen from the agenda that we are spending full five days thrashing out issues in 16 sub-committees. A number of Central ministers and other friends both from government and outside have agreed to join us despite the rigours of the season and the desert country through which we have to pass.

From all that I have said earlier you will see that in spite of the loose talks on the programme, concrete progress is being made. The mansion is being built brick by brick. That we can be ruthlessly honest in appraising ourselves is an asset we have created, which in a government apparatus is perhaps without a parallel. Let us hope and pray that the Mt. Abu Conference will open a new chapter still. May it give us the strength and determination to shape the crucial part of the philosophy we have so far professed! May we succeed in putting on the rail the "People's Programme" we have been crying for, in place of the "Good Government" programme we have piloted heretofore!

Till we meet then.

XVI

May 28, 1958.

Our friends and hosts, the Municipal Committee Mount Abu, could not have been more generous and more thoughtful in the parting gift they made to us. The "Kirti Stambh" stands behind me in my office. It reminds me of what man could do against superhuman odds, given the determination and honesty of purpose. It reminds me of what Rajasthan government did for us at Mt. Abu despite all natural limitations. I pray, the "Kirti Stambh" may mean as much to you.

We met; we parted. My appetite is not whetted. We met only collectively and had little time for communion individually. This conference has been too exacting on us. We must provide for more time in the future. The agenda will have to be adjusted accordingly. Meantime I can only try to make up for what I could not do, by meeting you individually. I am going out on a long tour of the South beginning the 4th of June. I have chosen to address you now, because the impressions I wish to convey may not remain fresh enough by the time I get back. Besides, I can hardly visualise the time for sitting down again for the next five or six weeks. This letter must therefore go before I get caught in other whirlwinds.

The conclusions and recommendations of the conference are being compiled as a top priority. The cyclostyled copies should reach you

before the end of the first week of June. The printed sets should not take long to follow. This conference has cost the tax-payers heavy. It has cost us no less in efforts. Mt. Abu will be fruitful only if the wealth of thinking can be transmitted to the ground with the same force.

Unity is mightier than the unit. This is the basis of democracy. Parliament and State Legislatures are expensive institutions. They do not always make substantial changes in the proposals and plans formulated by government. Yet we go through all these time-consuming and costly processes because these institutions are a continuing check against arbitrariness of government. Furthermore, plans and proposals, the understanding of which is confined only to a select few, cannot be implemented with the conscious will of the people. Here lies the difference between democracy and the totalitarian regimes.

Democracy is on trial the world over. France was the mother of the concept of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. We know what trials she is going through today. We see readily how premature democracy yet is in claiming its right to rule the destiny of man. Yet no amount of prosperity and well-being is worth looking at even in the short run, if the spirit is to be bartered in the process. The Community Development Programme in India is considered revolutionary despite all our failings and limitations. Basically the programme is an experiment on democracy.

Mt. Abu must now travel all along the line up to the village level as we discussed. I would urge that you place the recommendations before a special meeting of the State Development Committee. This may be followed by a meeting of the State Headquarters officials presided over by the Development Commissioner. The Commissoiners of Divisions where available or the Collectors of Districts may join the deliberations. The Commissioners in turn can hold a conference with the Collectors; Collectors can hold district level conference with the district heads of departments, Sub-Divisional Officers and the Block Development Officers. This should then find its final expression in a special meeting of the Block Development Committee. The Collector or the S.D.O. may participate to provide better understanding. No expenditure in time or money can be too high for this purpose.

I am convinced more than I can express, that the discussions I have recommended will carry understanding of our programme and the steps that lie immediately ahead, much more effectively than any other single measure that you could take during the coming year. I am prepared to join you at the State Development Committee meeting or other meetings wherever I can. This is an offer. I look now in retrospect at the highlights of the Abu Conference. I propose listing them here serially as ideas strike me at this distance in space and time.

(1) *Block Development Committee*: The Block Advisory Committee will be no more. Out of the debris of our experiences arises the Block Development Committee consisting of the representatives

of the panchayats elected by them, apart from M.L.As., M.Ps. and others. Appropriate measures will be taken by State governments to see that these Block Development Committees develop healthy conventions. The approval of the Block budget for general proposals and for individual schemes will be vested in the Block Development Committee. Exceptional cases as a rule will be referred to higher levels for decision. Let this be the transitional training ground on which the statutory bodies can later be based.

(2) *The Fourth Wheel in the Coach* : Community Development Programme till now was regarded as a movement of the people, the people's representatives and the people's servants. A fourth party joins us hereafter. They are the people's associates. The people's associates will hail from all sources—Bharat Sevak Samaj, Bharat Yuvak Samaj, Co-operative Union, Ramakrishna Mission, Gram Sahayaks, Social Welfare Board, All-India Women's Organisations, Adimjati Seva Sangh, Sarva Seva Sangh—in fact every possible non-official agency which can offer voluntary workers prepared to contribute to the programme. Gram Sahayaks perhaps will constitute the most important source.

(3) *Functional Competition versus Pulls Communal and Political* : There will be sub-committees of the Block Development Committee and the Panchayats, representing various facets of development at the respective level. These will include members of the Panchayat or the Block Development Committee according to their special aptitude and inclinations, and also the people's associates from the sources mentioned earlier. The idea is to start a new spiral of competition at functional levels as against the communal and political pulls with which our village institutions are often torn asunder. These sub-committees will commit many a mistake, as indeed they must, if they are functioning at all. Self-government does mean learning the art of government through trials and errors. Who are we to deny them this right? What is Community Development if the community is not to learn by its own experience?

(4) *The Basic Institutions* : Village panchayats and village co-operatives will be the basic institutions to which the utmost delegations will be made in respect of planning and implementation of the programme falling within their orbits. These institutions will marshal the resources of the community for programmes of permanent economic and social improvement. The village school will come in as a fresh nucleus of community activities for the children and youth alike. The village teacher will be drawn into the orbit of this programme. He will be given special training and special facilities in cash emoluments and also irrigated land which will be cultivated by the community in order to replenish his income.

(5) *Woman the Prime Mover* : Woman is the prime mover behind society. She must be awakened. For this there will have to be long and short-term measures both adopted concurrently. A concerted

drive has to be launched for enrolment of village girls to the school. Where a woman teacher is not available to facilitate this development, a school mother will be appointed from the local community on a small honorarium. For short-term measures, Gram-Lakshmis or Gram Kakis as are being tried out with conspicuous success in U.P. and Rajasthan in particular, will be adopted as a universal feature in all areas with funds specially earmarked for the women's programme as the revised budget now provides. Further resources can be added from the Industries programme of the various Boards and the Maternity and Child Welfare programme visualised under Public Health. There are also other budget heads from which women should have their due share.

(6) *The Crisis of Adolescence* : Our programme, we realise, is going through the crisis of adolescence. The child prodigy that evoked universal encomiums is now under discerning tests. Parents who are wise, bestow special attention to the adolescent in this crucial transition. They also seek assistance of friends and neighbours, shedding all thoughts of pride and prestige. Happily, there is almost as much co-ordination now between the Central Ministries as this programme calls for. In the intra-ministry seminar which we are holding today, we shall evolve procedures to make this co-ordination closer still. The National Conference on Community Development into which we plunged from Mussoorie, promises much better co-ordination between departments in the States than ever before. But co-ordination cannot create new content where none exists. Technical knowledge and resources by their very nature will grow gradually. If we are not to be held up meantime, it is but imperative that we make common cause with the new functional leaders who possess technical knowledge and resources that can enrich the quality and the content of the programme for all.

(7) *The Second Front* : We have been talking of a "Second Front". This must include the people's associates as we have chosen to call them. We recognise clearly that streamlining of the administration has its own limitations at our present level of functioning. There is also the other question of getting people at the grass roots involved as the architects of their own destiny. The government will continue to suffer for many years to come, under limitations of resources administrative, technical and financial. Country's progress therefore cannot depend merely on governmental doles in money and initiative. Resources of people, virtually limitless, must come into the pool if it is to be growing.

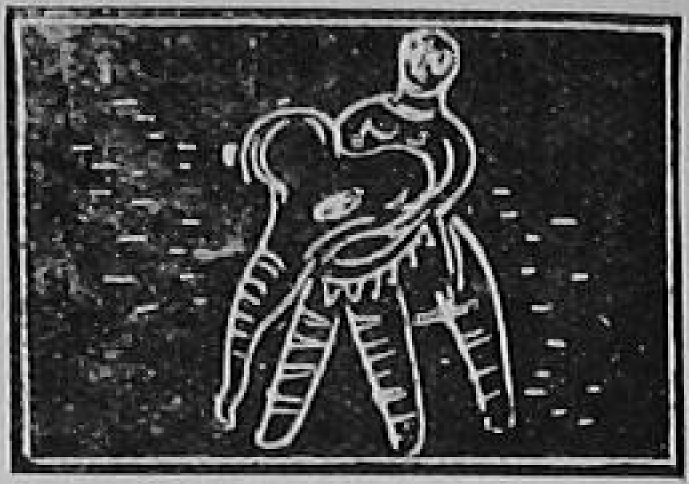
If we fail to see "the writing on the wall" and to steer through this uneasy transition, one thing at least is certain. Democracy shall not survive in India. If that happens, I have no doubt the world will be drowned in a new dark age the like of which has never been witnessed before. Science may have offered the beacon for our liberation from hunger, disease and ignorance. But the beacon has but been a

flicker till now. We have the memory yet fresh, of Hitler and his tribe. We are beginning to understand the hydrogen bomb in all its nakedness. We breathe the polluted air. We hear the groans of democracy getting fainter with the growing weight of insanity.

India, my friend, will determine whether or not democracy could survive. I would not like to live, if I have to lose my liberty; you would not either. Community Development programme in its present adolescence is the crucible in which the crucial issue is being tested. You and I must understand the gravity of the charge Providence has handed on to us. Because I feel it and recognise it, I move like one possessed. So do you too. You must recognise it.

XVII

July 17, 1958.



More than a month and a half has gone by since I addressed you last. I have been continually on the move. As I had feared, I had barely the time to sit down. The autumn session of Parliament begins again early next month. I propose to continue to be on the road till then. During this brief interval, I hasten to dash these lines to you.

You have received sometime back, first the cyclostyled and then the printed copies of the Summary of Conclusions of Mt. Abu as I had promised. The detailed proceedings are also in the press and I am told they will be ready for distribution soon.

I presume you have taken action already, or will be doing so soon, to ensure that the "Summit" of Mt. Abu does travel to the level ground, regardless of the time and cost that it may involve. I repeat, democracy means discussions–full free and frank, even though these may appear sheer waste of effort to the gifted few. Our programme on the ground ultimately shall be determined not so much by the depth of understanding in the Minister or the Ministry in the Centre, the Ministers or the Departments at the State Headquarters. It will depend mainly on how the Gram Sevaks, the Extension Officers and the B.D.Os. on the one hand, and the members of the Block Development Committee and the common members of the "Janata" on the other, interpret the objectives, the philosophy of the programme and its physics from stage to stage. If the tax-payer is to be convinced of the justification for the relatively high expenditure on the administration of the programme *vis-a-vis* the pure economic value of its content, it is essential that the staff engaged in the National Extension Service devotes a good portion of its time to extension of the ideas rather than extension of themselves. We must recognise that routines and procedures, figures and statistics are out incidentals and not ends.

INTRA-MINISTRY SEMINAR

I mentioned to you in my last letter that we were having an intra-Ministry seminar based on the thinking at Mt. Abu. You will receive for information the proceedings of this seminar. The seminar has been followed by group meetings on different subjects. The process still continues. We discover that our programme in adolescence today, calls for a radically new approach if it is to be administered for

the purpose with which it was started. Broadly, we propose to concentrate hereafter on the question of the *implementation* of the recommendations of Mussoorie and Mt. Abu. We have done enough thinking for the past six years on approach and philosophy, on principles and objectives, on targets and accomplishments. What is needed now pre-eminently, is to see what difficulties there are in giving effect to these recommendations. Thus alone can we bring to focus issues of a regional or national character which need to be tackled at various levels. Officers of our Ministry who visit States in a team will apply themselves more rigorously to the study of these questions.

Simultaneously, we propose to take up research into one or two typical questions on each subject relating to their implementation. The Action Research programme which was initiated first by the U.P. government is proposed now to be taken up by this Ministry for wider application. We propose, however, not to encroach on subject-matter research which is the field of specialised institutions already set up by government under different Ministries and Departments. Our research, if I may call it so, should be confined more to methodology by way of discovering why something which is being done somewhere cannot be done elsewhere. As the field is a vast one we have to limit our study to our existing resources both in the States and in the Centre. We hope to come to a decision shortly. We shall post you with further details as soon as we have finalised them.

PRIORITIES

Within the broad framework of the two basic objectives namely, emphasis on production and the actual transfer of the programme to the people, it is necessary for the State organisations to concentrate on the implementation of the Mussoorie and Abu recommendations. You cannot do this unless you make Departments in the States an understanding party to it. This to me appears to be priority number one for the Development Commissioners and others along the line—Commissioners, Collectors, S.D.Os. R.D.Os., B.D.Os. and Gram Sevaks. Official instructions are no substitute for personal contacts. If I continue to subject myself to the prolonged, monotonous and repetitive processes of carrying these round-the-table discussions with all concerned at all levels wherever I go, till almost my skin begins to burn near about midnight, it is because I have discovered that understanding cannot be over-extended, at least, for a very very long time to come. This, as you will no doubt have also experienced is a painful process indeed. One feels almost like a primary-school teacher. Incidentally, I realise how wretched the primary school teacher's lot happens to be. I would like you to do some serious thinking on this and correct me if you think I am erring in my assessment.

FROM THE TRAVEL DIARY

I have gone round several States fairly exhaustively—as time and physical endurance would permit. I should share with you some of the highlights of my experiences.

(i) *Operation Bunding at Parner* : Our old friend, Capt. Mohite, who is now Director of Agriculture in Bombay, joined hands with the Development Commissioner in a mass operation programme. In a few months they have bunded every field in the villages they could take up in two Talukas in the Ahmednagar District. The Collector, our old friend Zubairy, also put his shoulder to the wheel. It has been a planned operation which has overcome, at least for the time being, all differences of castes and classes in the villages involved. The result has been just amazing. It has been a rare demonstration of community action in which the government and the people have acted as one body and soul. It is to be seen to be believed. We have produced a film on this operation and it will be available for distribution to you. A write-up on it will also come out in the 'Kurukshetra'. If you can, do go and see the work for yourself, or send someone to visit the area.

(*ii*) *Operation Kharif in U.P.*: The U.P. government introduced a Kharif campaign throughout the State. Ministers, Legislators, Officers and the people, all were involved in the programme. It has already had its impact, drought and other calamities of nature notwithstanding. The Development Commissioner, the Director of Agriculture and others are already engaged planning for the Rabi campaign. With the experiences they have had of the Kharif programme, the Rabi campaign promises to be a still more effective one. The Uttar Pradesh government have really given a lead which is worth emulation.

Incidentally, while in U.P. and also elsewhere, I have realised how imprudent we have been in counting too much on medium and major irrigation and not doing enough on the time-proven traditional items such as wells, small bandaras and pumps, which alone can offer the promise of broad based irrigation. Unless such facilities are available for protective irrigation in the event of droughts and delayed monsoons, all our talk of universal Japanese paddy cultivation and other practices will be mere drawing room theories.

(*iii*) *Block Development Committee and Panchayats* : Block Development Committees, I find, are growing effective only where there is adequate representation from the panchayats. A sprinkling of nominated Panchayat Presidents or an elected crowd of one from every village, both act by way of rituals than as members of a budding democratic institution. I feel sad that in many areas our recommendation on this behalf sent out years ago and discussed threadbare often enough, is still to be implemented.

(*iv*) *Work and Training* : Where good work has been done, I find invariably that the workers—B.D.Os., Extension Officers or Gram Sevaks—have all been adequately trained. Indifferent work and untrained workers go together universally. Why not take full advantage of the training facilities repeatedly offered by this Ministry? Why allow hard-put resources to go waste? What is the difficulty? Could I have your confidence? I should be able to help. I must.

(*v*) *The Central Institute*: The Central Institute of Study and Research has at last been translated to the ground. Although the permanent staff is still to be secured, the first course has been run primarily with the resources of this Ministry, other agencies in the Centre, our friends in the Universities, the Development Commissioners and others whose services we could tap. The present being the season for heavy downpours in the hills, the second and third courses are proposed to be run in October and November. You will receive timely notice from the Training Division.

Let me tell you, I have had no cause so far to regret any basic omissions in our programme despite all shortcomings in implementation. There had been changes coming gradually and organically. In fact, if I were to begin this programme all over today, I would hardly deviate from what we did in 1952. But my brief experiences of this first course made me feel guilty for the first time that we did not start this Institute earlier. It was indeed very wrong on our part to take for granted that Collectors, B.D.Os. and Heads of Departments busy as they are could be baptised in the objectives and the philosophy of the programme just through casual seminars. Although the first course was more or less an exploratory one, I am fairly satisfied with the character of the instructions and the results achieved.

The trainees, I am convinced, left Mussoorie a good deal wiser, less sure of their previous knowledge. They have learnt much more of this all-India programme than they would have done otherwise. We propose to increase the enrolment for the coming courses. I hope you will not only send a larger contingent of trainees regardless of the inconvenience to the State arising out of their short absence, but also participate to the extent you can, in the community programme of

instructions for which we cannot but call on you from time to time. Once the permanent staff is in position, this Institute will take up research and I have no doubt, will develop soon into an institution of international importance.

ON THE SECOND FRONT

I mentioned in my last letter about the Second Front which we discussed at Mt. Abu. I have been thinking and talking of this ever since. In fact, it constitutes my major pre-occupation today. The official front is there already. Departments will be increasingly involved as they grow in stature. But I am convinced more than ever, that mere official effort is not going to carry us far; in fact the official machinery is squeaking already for no fault of its own. I certainly can demand no more of you. I feel guilty, I am taxing you so heavy already. I must devote myself cost what it may, to the opening of the Second Front to your aid. I mentioned the various organisations I had in view, in my last letter. By now, I have gone a step further. I am determined to bring all political organisations to the extent they have cadres, to take a plunge in the conflagration yet to be unleashed.

Food production is high priority. The awakening of the masses to an understanding of the philosophy and the objectives of the Community Development programme, their role in it and what they can expect of it, is equally so. These are clear issues on which there can be no differences on Party considerations. We are working out a detailed programme. You will hear about it soon. If I am talking about it at this stage, it is only because I wanted to assure you that the Second Front is the plank on which the programme will stand or fall. No stake is too high for this consummation.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT : A MATTER OF ORGANISATION

The more I look at the programme in prospect and retrospect, the more I realise that it is much less a financial or a technical question. It is one purely of organisation. Even in nature, evolution has been a continuous struggle for progressively higher levels of organisation. It is only stagnation which calls for no organisation. If man is to make nature a willing ally for a higher standard of living, every step above the *laissez-faire* margin, demands a progressively higher degree of collective effort. The problem of organisation grows correspondingly. Because we aim at the Community, the organisation becomes all pervasive. It covers all sectors of life and the Community, materials and energies latent or explicit.

As I see it, we have been tinkering far too long with the brick and mortar, ignoring the fact that the organisation of man at whatever levels we function, constitutes both the means and the end of our endeavour. We must begin to correct it. If we do, our conception of the community centre would undergo a radical change. We would then treat the village school, the teacher and the children as the nucleus of life in the village. Children do provide, at least in their early

age, a caste and classless society. Could we not begin our work of organisation from there till it begins to spread on to the others? Here also is something over which I wish you to pause and ponder and again correct me if you feel I am wrong.

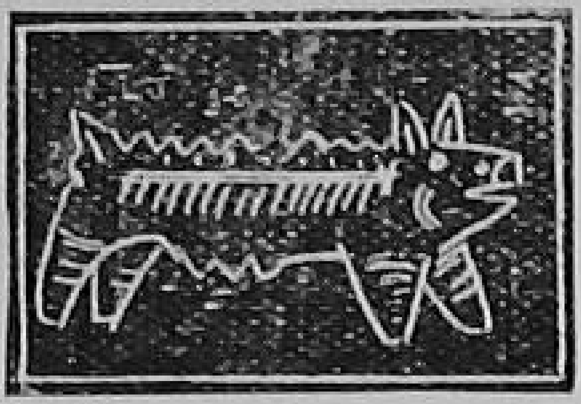
THE WORLD AROUND US

The world seems to be closing in on us, howsoever much we wish to be left alone doing a little basic reconstruction of ourselves. Just look around and see if there is sunshine visible in any of the adjoining countries and even in those which are called the big ones. We seem to be standing on the edge of a precipice. Despite all our pronounced failings, despite all the disparities between our professions and practices, we still seem to be the one country which does offer some rays of hope. Can one manage to maintain the temperature down in one's house when it is burning all around? Perhaps, if the air-conditioning apparatus is powerful enough and if it can continue to be fed with the energy it demands. The body has its limitations no doubt. The mind and spirit have none.

I wish you to look at the map of India. See the mighty Himalayas all over again as the crest overhead. Feel the touch of the waters of the Indian ocean. Were we not built for a different purpose? I seem to find meaning even in our degradation as a people for two thousand years, when we come to recognise that we have today a mission for life as such. We did serve the world once for centuries. The world calls on us again.

XVIII

August 28, 1958.



My race against time and across the country has come to a temporary halt. The Parliament session is on.

You will have read in the Press the report of the debate on food. Food is causing anxiety to every member in the Parliament. It is affecting every person, rich and poor. The Food and Agriculture Ministry have given a call for a mass campaign on the Rabi crop. There was recently a conference in Delhi of the Agriculture Directors and some Development Commissioners from States. I had the opportunity of participating in this meeting for some time. I also discussed the question of food production with individual representatives from States. We had a meeting about a week ago of the Central Committee also. Reviewing our operation, Prime Minister and everyone else in the meeting showed grave concern over the fact that we seem to proceed ahead conquering new territories leaving our enemies to pursue us overrunning the territories we leave behind. This is a frightening situation and unless the Community Development organisation wakes up to the realization of what is expected of it, the programme will have failed before it had really begun. I have decided accordingly to devote this letter primarily to an analysis of these questions.

BULK INCREASE THROUGH BULK EFFORT

You know, I am a field worker. I ought to know what I can expect of myself. You will, therefore, give me the credit for understanding your limitations also and not demanding more of you than you can offer. Food production in India is yet to be a technical problem. The vast bulk of our cultivable land is still being worked on the level of stagnation. Therefore, let us leave out of consideration, for the time being, the limited areas or holdings which are yielding at a fairly high level. With her fast growing population, India's food requirements, you will concede, will not be met through concentration of work on a few holdings in a village. If bulk increase is to be achieved and steady progress assured, the bulk of our land will have to be brought within the orbit of improved practices.

OUR KNOWN DISABILITIES

We know, an Agricultural Extension Officer with hardly any field experience, and one Gram Sevak for 1,500 families, are grossly inadequate for approaches to every family. Our technical department dealing with agriculture and allied subjects is yet to develop the requisite facilities for supervision and extension. Experiences take time to grow. Technical institutions can at best provide training in theory and a broad acquaintance with practices as things stand today. If these are done well, I should for the time being be quite content.

There is a shortage of fertilizers which we cannot make up however hard we may try. The projected fertilizer factories will take time before they take shape and go into production. Our foreign exchange crisis meantime precludes any substantial increase in the import of fertilizers. Our cattle will take time to be upgraded wholesale. Our seed farms are just beginning to produce the nucleus seeds. What do we do meantime? Do we fold our hands and wait till we have the facilities? And in the process starve and risk our hard-won freedom? Uttar Pradesh tried the Kharif campaign, as I mentioned to you last time, in a fairly large way. Other States have also tried campaigns on limited scales. We have gathered enough experiences by now to know how to get about it with our present limitations. I have some suggestions to offer.

EXTENSION AS AGAINST EXPOSITION

Whatever organisation we have at our disposal in the Agriculture Department and in the Community Development Blocks, let it be geared fully for *extension*. Try to relieve the technical organisation from the responsibility of routine functions such as weighment, sale and distribution of seeds, fertilizers and implements. I have continually to prune the branches of fruit saplings I planted in my garden in Delhi, in order to enable them to grow vertically as against its natural bent of expansion horizontally. If our technical staff, who have acquired technical knowledge at considerable expense to themselves and the country, are to make their real contribution, it is of the utmost importance that they be relieved of all routine functions which can be taken care of by people's organisations such as the co-operatives and the panchayats.

These institutions are crying for something concrete to bite from day to day so that they can grow. But we continue monopolising all activities for the government agency, to our own detriment and to the detriment of the national programme. Improved seeds which we have, can be multiplied by registered seed growers selected by panchayats or co-operatives, who in turn should take the responsibility for collection of the seeds grown and its eventual distribution to the farmers. If godowns are required, these may be built with subsidy under the Community Development programme. This is definitely better than the creation of community halls and radio listening posts which are hardly in use except by a limited few or on the occasions of visits by V.I.Ps.

Top priority should be given to the digging of small wells which can be spread widely over all villages. This will demand local materials and labour, thereby creating employment opportunities for the unemployed and the under-employed. Meantime, mass efforts are indicated for desilting and resuscitation of derelict tanks and wells. Every resource that we have had, must be harnessed in full before new expenditure is incurred on fresh schemes. The tubewells we have in Community Development Blocks must be utilized fully by provision of field channels and distributaries. These again will mean work for the local people and will offer scope for mass participation. It is fantastic that schemes costing crores of rupees of hard borrowed resources from abroad should lie unused, while we continue begging resources for new schemes. You should share my distress over the discovery that at the end of the First Five Year Plan we had less land under actual irrigation than we began with. How could this happen unless we actually allowed old sources of irrigation to go derelict in our obsession for new installations and new show-pieces?

Every village in India has its cowdung, cattle urine and its heaps of dry leaves which are a menacing sight from the point of view of sanitation. Why should it not be possible to have a mass campaign on a compost pit for every family so that all this waste material will go into the pits for being transformed into life-giving manure for the soil. Why not get the Panchayats to do all this? We have by now trained over 400,000 Gram Sahayaks in different parts of the country. Why not put these Gram Sahayaks, the Krishi Pandits and other prize winners in agriculture, to the task of propagating their improved practices to about ten times their number? This by itself should start the snowball which can gather volume till every cultivator family has been brought within the orbit of improved practices.

I wish you were present in the Parliament galleries to witness the anxieties and the sense of virtual helplessness that were displayed during the debate on food last week. You would have shared my sense of humiliation if you had listened to the defence that the Prime Minister had to offer in the House for our Agricultural Department and equally so for the Community Development programme which has food production and community organisation as its main objective.

THE THREE MOTTOES

Now, to sum up, so far as this food production is concerned, it is one of bringing a new orientation in ourselves—from paper to action, and from things to people. May I give you three slogans? These are :—"Organisation", "Utilization", and "Popularization". Let us streamline and organisation such as we have, and see that it is geared from the headquarters of the State down to the ground for adequate supervision and extension. Let us utilize every resource that we possess, and which is now going waste. Let us stop bemoaning what we do not have and cannot have in the foreseeable future. Let us make sure that the main initiative of the programme of food production is transferred to the sub-committee of the Block Development

Committee, to the village panchayats and the village co-operatives and from them through the Gram Sahayaks to the village people as we agreed to at Mount Abu. Let us shed the illusion that the Gram Sevak by himself, will achieve individual planning and action for every family. Let us utilize every single organisation–Sarva Seva Sangh, Bharat Sevak Samaj, Bharat Krishak Samaj, Young Farmers Clubs, Gram Sahayaks. Workers, one and all, irrespective of political affiliations must be rallied to the task. Let us then concentrate on the few items which can make an incisive and a decisive impact on food output based on such resources as we have locally.

If we do all these, there should be a substantial difference by the time the Rabi crop has been harvested. It should also make a difference in the initiative which we have been looking for in the village people and the absence of which has universally been a ready target of attack on this programme throughout. I would also like you in this connection to refer to the opening article by Dr. Douglas Ensminger in the Independence Day Number of 'Kurukshetra'. You will find it a frank and outstanding exposition of the subject. There are certain issues raised in this article which are beyond the scope of our workers. These will be tackled at appropriate levels. But the bulk of it which relates to work in the field, should help our workers materially in the food production drive. Incidentally, Dr. Ensminger has written a guide book for Gram Sevaks on agricultural production. This has already been circulated to all of you in a draft form for comments. We propose to have it published as a priority as soon as the comments have been received. This book will be made available to all our workers on the ground.

ON THE SECOND FRONT AGAIN

I would now come straight to the question of the "Second Front", because as I might have indicated earlier to you, food production and the Second Front are today my sole pre-occupation. Government organization is being loaded with increasing volume of work every day. We cannot expand this organisation horizontally without requiring a corresponding expansion in supervisory agencies. Supervisory agencies cannot be manned by bodies alone. The bodies must have heads with experiences. Since experience cannot be acquired overnight, undue expansion in supervisory agencies can lead only to confusion as we see already.

Till experience grows, we have necessarily to make the best of the situation by tapping non-official resources at all levels. We can thus help also in the decentralization of our work and in developing the growth of democracy to which we stand wedded. But democracy cannot grow by simple addition of institutions or bodies in these institutions. Non-officials have a lot of experiences to offer. But these have to be organized into disciplined patterns. Training of non-officials thus acquires a unique importance in the new context. We have

perforce to think in terms of training members of co-operatives, members of panchayats and members of Block Development Committees. This training has to be imparted through the joint effort of officials and non-officials.

TRAINING FOR INITIATIVE AND ACTION

In my recent visit to Andhra, I came to see in action some of the Block Panchayat Samitis which they have established in pursuance of the recommendation of the Balwantrai Study Team. Andhra State have also realised that the creation of Block Panchayat Samitis will be no answer unless the members of the Block Panchayat Samitis have been trained in the philosophy and the objectives of the Community Development programme and their role in it. A programme of *ad hoc* training for the members of the twenty Block Panchayat Samitis now in Andhra is in progress in two centres in the State. We shall no doubt gain from the experiences of Andhra.

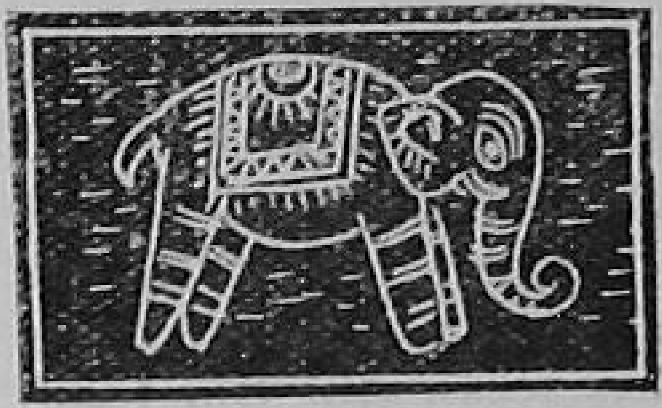
We have meantime to think in terms of the 75,000 members of all the Block Development Committees. This you see is a very large number. We have to tackle this programme if the "Block Development Committees" we agreed to at Mt. Abu are to be a reality. These committees must develop initiative and responsibility and provide the foundation on which the Block Panchayat Samitis can later be based. The Ministry of Community Development is already engaged in a serious study of this matter. We know, even the association of all the non-official institutions and organisations in the country will not be enough for conducting this gigantic programme of training. Yet we have to do our very best. We must bring such of the M.Ps. and M.L.As. who will be prepared to participate in this programme of training. The programme will be finalized soon. We hope also to start a few pilot courses for gathering field experiences before we launch the programme on the 1st of April, the target date we have set for ourselves. The Block Development Committee members will have to be trained before the end of the Second Five-Year Plan.

ACTIONS OR ASPIRATIONS?

We propose holding the family conference of Development Commissioners which we approved at Mussoorie, sometime before the end of October or around the beginning of November. When we meet, we would naturally like to discuss what difficulties we are experiencing in the implementation of Mussoorie and Abu recommendations. As for objectives and principles, we have talked and evolved enough, I believe, for a generation. What we must concentrate on from now will be problems in the actual implementation of agreed decisions. The field teams which are now visiting States on behalf of the Ministry, have been charged to talk in terms of problems and possible solutions they can offer on the spot or immediately on return. We have necessarily to eschew polemics on hopes and aspirations.

XIX

September 30, 1958.



The autumn session of Parliament is over. I shall again be out on the road to which I belong. Meantime, we approach a significant event, the sixth anniversary of our programme which we began on October 2, 1952. We have been immersed in work. The pressure of routine has been mounting continually. We have been struggling hard. There seems no prospect of a respite. I was beginning to feel a sense of oppression under the weight of this burden. I felt also a desperate urge to ascertain for myself whether the direction of our travel was right and if we were not moving round the circle like the blinded camel yoked to the Persian wheel. I struggled to do some fasting, this time from work after years, be it even for a day. I was anxious to recapture a glimpse of the perspective which gets lost in the grind of daily routine.

ON THE BANK OF THE GANGA

I do congratulate myself. I got away for two days to a place where I longed to be, for years now. I write this to you from Hardwar, the base of Mother Ganga where she descends from the Himalayas through yonder foot-hills and forges ahead with the fervour of perennial youth across the terrain of India. The words I wish to convey to you get merged in the sound of the waters gushing down. The ocean at Kanya Kumari, the mountains and the mighty rivers of India have had profound influence on us all, through the ages. The confluence of waters in the ocean at Kanya Kumari gives one a touch of infinity before which one grows infinitesimal, the fever of ego within drops down to a point below absolute zero in temperature. The mountains have an impact of grandeur, solidity and quiet before which one feels prayerful. The spell of a river like the Ganga with the history of India as she has moulded through the ages, is something totally different. I feel neither proud nor humble. I see boulders rolling through the beds of this mighty river being rounded up to an infinite variety of shapes and sizes, and pulverised till we meet them again as the micro-particles of sands, all meeting together in the estuary of the ocean to which the Ganga finds her ultimate consummation. There is nothing static about the Ganga; she is in eternal motion. She is unperturbed by the coming and going of man and the kaleidoscope that unrolls from moment to moment, from age to age.

LOOKING BACK

From these solitary thoughts I come back to our work at which you, I and others have been straining without respite. I discover, we have ushered in a new age. We have put the core of India on the move. This, no power on earth can any longer arrest. We have achieved things physically, although against what should be, we are still straining at the beginning. We have been working honestly; we have been working hard, perhaps a little too hard at times and places. This is where we have some lessons to learn from Mother Ganga. She has been flowing heedless of the wiles of men, their pleasures or displeasures, their approbation or disapproval. We do not seem always to have acted on the lessons we had learnt from our mother. We have often tended to be influenced by what others *would* say. We have moulded our approach at times to work accordingly. Our failure in the programme has been proportional strictly to the extent we have tried to conform to what we thought others above us would like to see. We have overlooked that our success can only be to the extent we can go ahead guided by the voice from within and its echo from without. I would like you to think this over and see if my interpretation is correct. If it is, how best can we transmit this lesson afresh to our workers on the ground ?

I said, we are perhaps working too hard at times. I seem to be underrating the situation. One Gram Sevak for a population of six to ten thousand is too fantastic a charge for a single man to bear. What is worse, we have been adding to the load continually, till this man is virtually breaking down or is tending to work merely on the surface. I wish you to put your hand on your heart and answer for yourself the question—what you think a man wants in life ? You will find the voice echoing back "Recognition, Recognition, Recognition." What is it we lack in India which others have, by dint of which they have ruled over us in the past politically, and continue to dominate us even today economically? Again, you will find only one answer—"Organisation, Organisation, Organisation." Yet, is it not tragic that we continue arrogating to ourselves burdens and responsibilities, heavier than we can ever fully shoulder ? Is it not equally foolish to deny the opportunity for self-expression and growth to tens of thousands who are crying to share our burden ? Such people are to be found in unlimited numbers in all village panchayats, village co-operatives, village schools, Block Development Committees, District Development Committees, State Legislatures and our Parliament. There are besides, the millions young and old, who do not formally belong to any organisation but have time hanging heavy on them in the absence of a creative outlet for their aching energies.

THE DISEASE OF FUNDAMENTALS ?

Is it not tragic that while fundamentals provide the very core and definition of India, we should continue looking to the west which is yet to find its spiritual moorings ? Come, my friend to Hardwar any time you can. Sit by the side of the flowing Ganga and have a

dip in her soothing waters. You cannot but realise that the son of Parvati needs no more lessons on fundamentals. What he does need however are lessons afresh on organisation that will fit into the scientific age of today which we are yet to master. This, the youthful West can help us learn. We should not feel shy standing at her feet for these lessons and give her back as *dakshina* if we can, a few lessons on fundamentals which we can spare in abundance.

SUBSTANCE OR SHADOWS?

I feel deeply perturbed as I continue gazing at these flowing waters over how, we, as blind imitators, are tending fast to get uprooted from the moorings which have been our richest heritage. Do recall for a moment that the greatest schools in India were conducted not in the biggest buildings but by the wisest teachers in the forests in the precincts of foliage offered by nature. Yet we go searching for mighty buildings. We squander our scanty resources on construction. We have little to spare for the teachers or what the pupils would need for their day to day lessons in the school. The village banyan provided the panchayatghars throughout India. We prune and fell these down with a cruelty bordering on savagery. We erect mighty buildings which are rarely used except for ceremonial occasions. We have mighty agriculturists who for generations have fed themselves and their neighbours by the skill of their hands. We refuse to use them as the extension agent for agriculture. We impose the burden instead on raw graduates who are no more than suckling babes so far as practical knowledge is concerned.

LESSONS FROM THE KUMBH MELA

These are gloomy thoughts that cloud and disturb the cheers that this mighty river injects into my soul. I thought I must share these with you. Whom else could I commune with? We know India is on the rise. As I have said repeatedly, no power on earth or above can resist her. Yet, it needs telling that the greatness of India lies in her growth on continuing foundation in ever fresh synthesis of ideas as came her way. If we are to move forward, we have to look backward as much. The Ramayana and Mahabharata have enjoyed the status of epics for centuries, because their lessons are eternal. We need not go far to learn what should be social education for our people. We may look back at these two great epics and see how these have moulded the lives of generations regardless of caste, colour and creed. We may wonder how they have contributed to the common culture we pride in today. Hardwar is the seat of the Kumbh Mela; three million is just about the smallest number that join this celebration every twelfth year, totally uninvited from the far corners of India. Try to search out for one who joined this last. Find out what prompted him to go through this ordeal and what he got out of it. You will discover what is social education in India. You will find answers to the entire gamut of our problems. A pilgrim can learn from a pilgrim alone.

P. S. The above is the message I received at Hardwar. May this mean as much to you!

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November 11, 1958.

My very hearty greetings on this Diwali day. Diwali or Deepavali as we call it, has a special significance for us in India. Diwali marks the end of the monsoon in India. So we made it a custom to get our houses white-washed and renovated for the year after the ravage of rains. The gas emitted by the crackers and fire-works also helps eradicate microbes and bacteria which grow during the monsoon and work as the enemies of life. The universal illumination is the signal for the bright days ahead and the yellow harvest that is to follow soon to be garnered. May this mean as much to you! May this also usher in the new thinking we call for, so that we may be in tune with the new situation that the fast moving world imposes on us!

INDIA SANDWICHED IN BETWEEN

Through a strange set of circumstances, we seem to have grown to be the only country still groping for the road to life without getting ourselves entangled one way or the other. Country after country has adopted what is known as the communist way of life. Country after country has also fallen under military rule. These two opposite developments, although with a lot in common, are helped in the process by two giants who with their friends continue tramping against each other, further aggravating the intensity of this new development. Ours seems to be the sole country that stands sandwiched between the two colossus perhaps destined to track middle way.

THE THREE EVENTS

Three events have taken place for us since I communed with you last from Hardwar. The significance of these will take time to seep into our system. Our future, if we are to be the path-finder for ourselves if not others, will undoubtedly be determined by how we assimilate these developments and what use we make of these as a sequel. Early this month, we have had the conference of the Ministers of Local Self-Government and Panchayats. The conference seems to have applied itself for the first time to the study of the basic role that should be played by the Panchayats, if our democracy is to be a reality

instead of a shadow. The Staff Conference of Development Commissioners closely followed. It discussed this aspect more than anything else. The N.D.C. meeting which came next gave the finishing touch to earlier thinking on this subject. I have decided necessarily to devote this brief letter exclusively to a summing up of my own impressions.

ROLE WHICH IS THEIRS

The Panchayat Ministers' Conference brought out the fact unmistakably that Community Development is Panchayat development. Local Self-Government Departments in States have been unwise in playing a secondary if not a nominal role in this vast countrywide movement. The participants in the conference have gone back with determination writ large on their face to plunge without reservation into the movement that has been unleashed and assume the role which is theirs in its consummation.

THE COCOON

The Development Commissioners' Conference grappled with this hour after hour. The arguments and cross-arguments only went to confirm how we forgot in practice that it was the non-official organisations which we were charged to build, instead of weaving a self-contained cocoon round the official organisation. The cocoon gives warmth no doubt. But it also provides cause for the ultimate destruction of the worm encaged within. We seemed to forget also that an efficient administrative apparatus and an ignorant and static mass of people are uneasy fellow travellers if democracy is the destination.

THREE KEY INSTITUTIONS

At the N.D.C., the Prime Minister for the first time expressed his disappointment and regrets over the relative failure of the Community Development movement to achieve popular initiative which was its objective. Happily for us, Prime Minister did not stop there. He did also point the way out. For the first time the clear directive has come from the highest forum of government, namely the N.D.C., that the Panchayat, the Co-operative and the village-school must more or less be co-terminus. They must be the fulcrum around which all village development must move. It has been laid down in unmistakable terms that the development of these institutions for their integrated, comprehensive and total role in village development, shall be the major pre-occupation of the Community Development movement. It has been laid down that the role of the Government organisation will be the promotion of these institutions and the use of these as its sole agents for village development. There shall be no competition between government and these institutions in matters technical, financial or ideological. Once this is achieved all else will follow.

NEED FOR THE SECOND FRONT

Since most of you have attended these discussions in person, I know, there is hardly need for further emphasis. Yet, your problem

and mine today consists mainly of how we propagate this understanding without attenuation in transit to co-workers down the line—the Collectors, S.D.Os. and especially the Block Development Officers. It is the B.D.O. in particular on whom will rest the day to day direction of the movement on the ground. From my experience in the farflung regions of this country, I find that where the B.D.O. has been wise enough to understand his own limitations, he has invariably made common cause with the people and their representatives. In such areas a movement of the people, their representatives and the government servants is clearly manifest. Even a blind can see and a paralytic can feel the impulses. But where the B.D.O. is lacking in stature, the movement is a cramped one. Instead of serving as carrier, the government agency has turned to be one of careerists—good at exhibition but totally devoid of any substance within. I have written enough on this subject. I have no doubt you have spoken enough also already. Further official mandates in this behalf will be of little avail; even personal visits by you or your deputies are not going to achieve very much although they undoubtedly will help. What is required is a determined bid to build up the Second Front as fast as we can.

PARTICIPATION IN FREEDOM'S BATTLE?

Village Panchayats must be established. They must also be assigned the proper role. But if they are to discharge their responsibilities, there has to be adequate preparation. The failure in this will spell the sure defeat of the movement. It will seal the growth of democracy and democratic socialism which destiny has charged us to work on. From whichever angle I look at it, every time I come back to the thesis that Block Development Committee members hold the key to the next step. They must be trained in the objective and philosophy of the Community Development Programme, the day to day mechanics of its implementation and the relationship of all these to the socialist society we aim at. It should indeed be a matter of pride to the government organisation as a whole that the primary role for the transmission of the philosophy and physics of this to the people has devolved on it. Everyone that mans this organisation should welcome this opportunity for national service in which few of us had a hand when the battle for freedom was being waged through blood, sweat and tears.

HOW THE MILLIONS CAN SHARE OUR BURDEN

The Community Development Ministry is going full steam ahead to work out the programme of training these members of the Block Development Committees effecting collaboration between non-official and official agencies as fast as the mutual resources can be built up. You can help a tremendous lot even during the transition by entrusting powers of discretion to Block Development Committees and ensuring that government shall undertake no works or activity at the village level which can be conducted by the village-school, the village cooperative or the village panchayat, even at reduced efficiency. Teaching a child is a time consuming process and entrusting a job to one not used

to discharge heavy responsibilities will involve risks; we know it. Risks can be reduced enormously if there is willing and expert supervision. I know, this may mean a slight slowing down of activity immediately. I am prepared to face it. The cumulative effect of the broad-basing of our effort will begin to be felt much sooner than we are ready to concede now. When that begins to happen, instead of twentyfive and odd thousands of village level workers and their counterparts at the Block level, we shall have millions in the countryside aching to share our burden. Isn't this worth all the temporary setbacks that we may fear?

LOOKING THROUGH A DIFFERENT MIRROR

I have been reading lately news pouring in from China of their new programme of communization of the whole countryside. The programme is more or less on the pattern of the Community Development movement we are running in India. The coverage and the activities are by and large identical with ours. The difference lies in the fact that their programme is entrusted wholly to the organisations of people in every village, especially the co-operatives. This has unleashed the creative faculties of people which are staggering even to read. How else do you account for 60 to 70 per cent increase in a year in agricultural production over the high rate of yield China already had? How else do you explain the further 60 or 70 per cent increase in the target which they have planned for the next year? What has generated this unconquerable will in people to forge their own machines and appliances with timber, stones and local materials whichever they can lay their hands on?

It is flattering no doubt to hear that a country of 600 millions has now chosen to launch the countrywide movement which we heralded six years back. But it is a little more than humiliating to us as a people that our achievement should pale into relative insignificance despite the six years of our unremitting struggle. Is it not time we pause a bit and ponder? Is it not time to take a new leap forward, the one we have been talking about so often? Is it not time to realise that this vessel of National Extension Service was forged for extension alone, that the people are to be the prime movers and we are being judged today, and will be tomorrow, by that alone?

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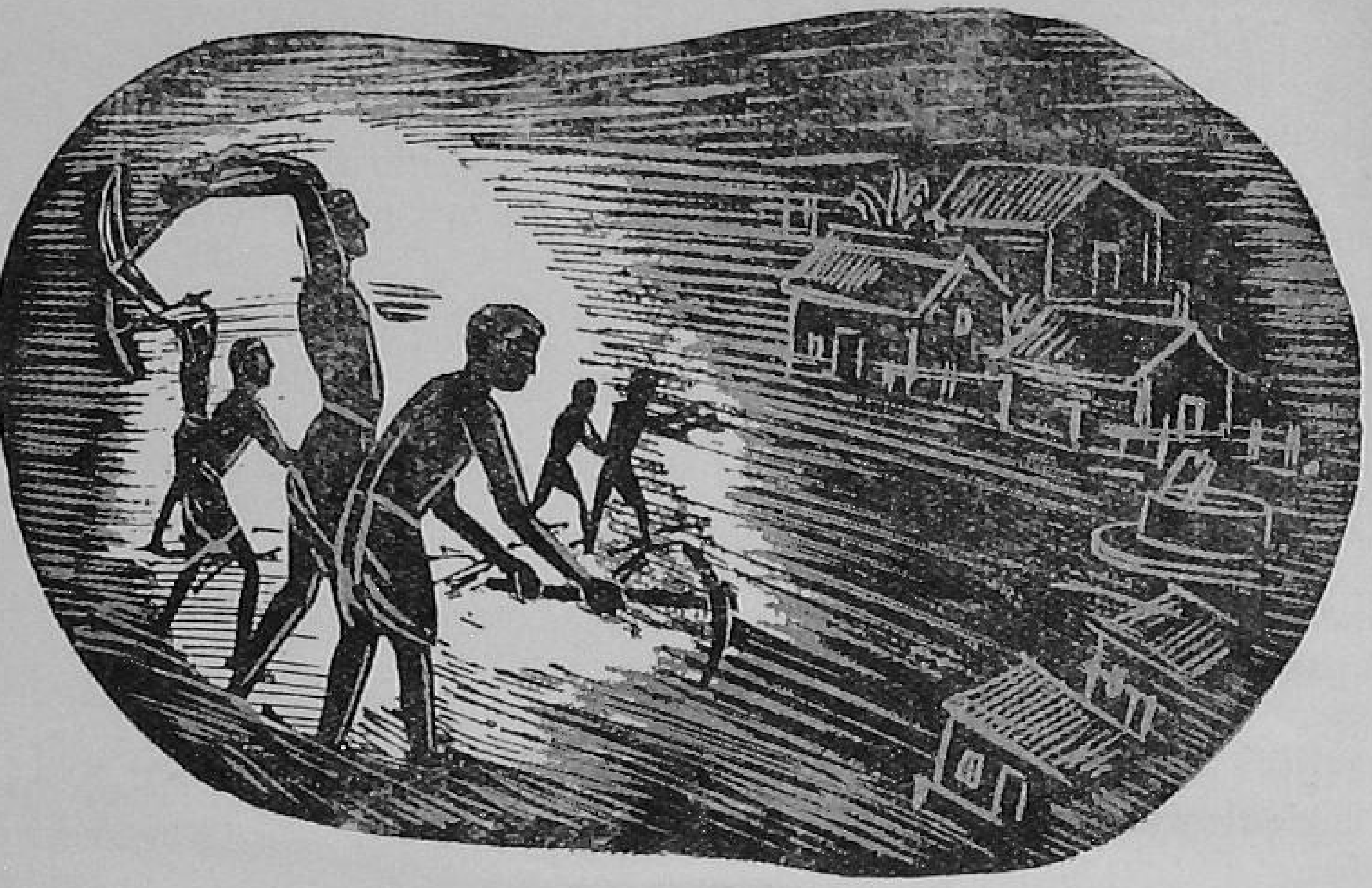
December 24, 1958.



Things are beginning at last to move. Our friend, Narasimham from Andhra, met me in my office a few days ago. He was exuberant over the enthusiasm released in the 20 Blocks where Block Samithis are already in operation. The Development Commissioner, Madras, radiates the same spirit now that Madras has passed its Bill for the Block Samithis in the legislature and is just getting ready to go ahead full-steam. The South, as we all know, is conservative by nature, never cheaply excited. The South has been relatively free from the recurring invasions which have been the lot of the North. In a large measure the South conserved and promoted the culture and traditions which we feel proud of as Indians. When this South plunges ahead with a new idea, you can take it as a certainty that they find substance in it, they mean business. Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Mysore also are going ahead with necessary legislation. Other States in India are also forging these ideas into concrete patterns suited to their areas. Therefore, I can say with bold confidence that "democratic decentralisation" will hold the day, sceptics notwithstanding.

Ideas have a potency of their own. But, by themselves, they are most inadequate. It is the men behind and ahead of ideas that matter more so far as action is concerned. Whether you have a Statutory Block Samithi or a simple Block Development Committee as we have now, will not therefore make much of a difference in the short run, provided the people who man these bodies or those who over-see them have the requisite understanding and the determination to work the system in the spirit which underlies it. You will be happy to know

here that the Centre is sponsoring a Study Circle Camp of M.Ps. belonging to our Consultative Committee. The first in the alphabetical list of States in India, namely Andhra, is playing the host for the first camp. The camp will be for a week and commences on January 29, 1959. A tentative agenda for the camp has already been drawn. The subjects covered are almost the same as we propose to cover for the training of our Block Development Committee members. This will mean that the M.Ps.'s camp will disseminate understanding of the implications of our programme in the wider context. Our M.Ps. in turn, will be able to carry this farther nearer the ground. This camp of M.Ps. of all parties joined under a common programme has a new significance without a parallel or a precedent so far as I know of. This I know is bound to repeat with the members of the State Consultative Committee. We have already taken up the production of a series of small guide books written in simple language which can cover the subjects and serve as common reference. Action is also proceeding simultaneously for finalising the programme of training of Block Development Committee members. I am asking our Panchayat Commissioner to send you proceedings of our thinking so far done in the Ministry as a prelude to further concrete action.

Closely on the heels of the N.D.C. decision, the Central Committee presided over by the Prime Minister have given the mandate for a reclassification of the budget pattern of Community Development Programme both for Stage I and Stage II Blocks. You will have received an official communication on this subject from the Ministry almost simultaneously with the arrival of this letter. You will note that with effect from the beginning of the new financial year 1959-60, the provision under "Local Works" will be placed at the disposal of the Block Development Committee for allocation to, and implementation by, village Panchayats as a mandate. This provides you immediate substance with which you can help energise the Panchayat Departments which have been languishing for want of financial resources. Panchayat departments in States are also being advised accordingly. We also expect that concurrently with the training of Gram Sahayaks in the field of agriculture, you will take up the camp training of Sarpanches. I believe, one such camp for the block should be ample to start with. This can be followed perhaps during the next winter by similar training programme for all the Panches. We shall no doubt discuss this in further detail when we meet at Sanasar (J & K) for the next annual Conference. The suggestive curriculum for the Gram Sahayak pattern training of Sarpanches or Mukhias as the case may be, is on the anvil. It will be transmitted to you shortly.

The re-adjustment of Community Development budget and the training of non-officials will certainly help. But, this is not enough. Something more is needed from above to ensure that in the eyes of our block officials and others, due emphasis is placed on this long overdue shift in priority from "Things" to the "People". I have decided to bring a shift in my own code of conduct to start with. When I am

in Delhi, I am making it a practice to meet all delegations of villagers from projects who pass through Delhi on Bharat Darshan tour or for any other purpose. While on tour, I desire you hereafter to draw my programme in a district on a pattern altogether different from the one to which you and I have been used till now. Apart from seeing work in a few villages on the productive sector of our programme, I would like to meet the following engagements in every district I visit :—

(1) A meeting with officials consisting of the Collector, District Officers, all the Block Development Officers, and the M.L.As. and M.Ps. of the district.

(2) A meeting with Mukhias or Sarpanches at the rate of one from every Gram Sevak circle in the blocks within the district.

(3) A meeting with Gram Sahayaks at the rate of one from every Gram Sevak circle in the blocks within the district.

I realise that this will impose a small burden of travelling expenses on the block budget for all these functionaries. But the expenditure is negligible compared with the opportunity and dignity that such a programme will offer to these non-official agencies. It will also help overall appraisal of the programme and the determination of appropriate correctives. In any case, the expenditure will be much less than what we incur cumulatively on Torans, buntings, band parties and what not, in multitudes of villages which have grown to be the unhappy imposition on ministers. I certainly would like to keep away from all these artificialities and use my energies and yours to the full on the new phase of Community Development. My programme can continue to be drawn as heretofore on the basis of 12 hours of work during the day which I should be quite happy to extend up to 14, provided the pattern I have prescribed can be conformed to. If you have any reason to disagree with my prescription, you may let me know. But if we do not hear from each other to the contrary, I would expect that all future programme for me in your territory will be conducted on the pattern I have outlined and that you would not blame me if I fail to comply with any deviations from it.

There is one more specification I have to suggest. This is being conveyed to you after a good deal of practical experience behind. All meetings, so far as I am concerned, I would like to see arranged on the ground. Where good grass is available, it should serve us well. Where it is not, a plain durrie may be placed on the ground where all people assembled in the meeting may sit regardless of their station in life. I say this because I find that chairs are not only insulators in the electrical sense, but are also the worst insulators of spirit. We spring from and go back to the same Mother Earth. Our programme is one dealing with the grass roots. Let us be near it. We would then be nearer to the problems as also the solutions. We have had enough of life with our head and feet both in mid-air. May this be over now !

I have been to Mussoorie twice during the third course which concluded a few days ago. I rejoice over what this institute has achieved. Despite all the difficulties with which we still continue to grapple starting from the permanent staff to all other aspects, the institute is slowly coming to its own. The permanent staff also will soon be in position. The course is short. But I am convinced, it has done more than anything else to give the trainees an understanding of what Community Development is in theory. Life at the institute offers further practice for the theory in action. I wish, more of our Collectors and Heads of departments could be sent to this Institute. We propose to run six courses during the next year. We shall also have a fair number of non-official representatives of our people, from the Parliament as also from the State legislatures associated with the course. I do hope, the State government as also the officers concerned will be able to realise that the world with all its thorny problems is certainly not resting on any one's shoulders. There are millions sharing the burden. No one really is indispensable. It will do immense good to our officers if they can come in increasing numbers. I do hope, you will help.

Our Training Commissioner, S. C. Roy, is rushing about with a speed verging on madness to bring into existence eight Orientation Training Centres for Block Level Officers, including B.D.Os. before the end of the current financial year. The Trainers' Training Institute for the training of staff in the centres run by our Ministry and for the Principals of the Extension Training Centres in States, has been sited at Rajpur near Dehra Dun. The Principal is already there with the staff. The Institute will begin to function from the middle of January. This should help. We propose not long from now to take up a short term refreshers' training of all existing functionaries. You should hear more about it soon.

With the training programme for officials and non-officials alike landed on the ground and the method of supervision properly geared up, the Ministry will begin to devote its attention virtually single minded to the all-important question of Panchayats and Co-operatives in both of which it will have a direct responsibility. I am determined to make one final dash either to break through the barrier or to crash in the process. I am clear that our work till now has been one of preparation, rehearsal to be more appropriate. The ghosts of centuries will begin to face us only from now. We have fought in sand and dust. I am proud of what we have achieved. It has been significant by the meanest count. The battle now round the corner will call for more than sweat. The contradictions have been precipitated. Congratulations. But issues have to be fought. I am having oil massage to thicken my skin for the thorns ahead. I know, time is in our favour; so are the world conditions. I will withstand, come what may. I would have to make an even greater call on you in the years that lie immediately ahead, the call not necessarily in volume but of a quality different from the one to which we have been used till now.

The keys left behind by the British rulers have been wielded with admirable success at the Centre and in the States despite all our failings. These have now to be carried many steps forward till these have been delivered to the real masters who will have been trained by us to take care of these keys to life, to secure these from usurpers and parasites. The real problem of Community Development is about to begin. The mighty past pushes us, the future beckons, the present impels us to action. Thus, the old year recedes, the New Year begins to dawn. New hopes and promises. New faith and vigour for the new effort. More power to your elbow, more of that quality which you will be called upon to share unceasingly with others. With greetings for the season and cordial wishes for health, joy and cheers to you and yours.

P.S. Do read Kurukshetra of December issue just issued—the Panchayat and Co-operation Special—and insist on others along the line doing the same. The issue offers a fertile forum for a start to the new destination.

INDICES

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